

IMPERIAL PANAMA:
COMMERCE AND CONFLICT IN ISTHMIAN AMERICA,
1550-1750

By

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1988

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This Study is Dedicated

to my Family:

Nobbi, Anne, Jack, and Billy

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PREFACE

In the summer of 1983 I made my first trip to Panama, my father having just become a pilot on the Panama Canal. It proved to be a journey into a mysterious past that changed the direction of my studies. That summer I discovered the ruins of a great empire, all but lost beneath the gnarled, brooding jungles of the Central American tropics. A glimmer of former glory shimmered from the rain-dampened stones and rusting cannon that lay scattered across Nombre de Dios, Portobelo, and Old Panama. It was this glimmer--the last faint indication of world-wide Hapsburg power--that led me to abandon German history and embrace the Spanish Empire as the focus of my scholarly training.

After my first visit to Panama, I immediately searched the libraries to learn something of this once great imperial center. My efforts were in vain, a few superficial studies my only reward. No detailed and reliable study of colonial Panama had yet been written, despite a general consensus among historians that the isthmus was one of the keystones in

the foundation of Hapsburg florescence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Historians even remotely interested in Panama were either Central Americanists (MacLeod, Woodward, for example) or Gran Colombianists (Bushnell, Sharp): in the historiography of Latin America, Panama had fallen into a giant crack. At first the paucity of information about Panama came as a disappointment, but in the end it proved something of a blessing. After all, in the overworked discipline of history, how often does a graduate student come across an entire country, the past of which is virgin research territory?

And so this study began. After reading the few books and articles that were available, I returned to Panama the following year and spent three months working the Archivo Nacional in Panama City and the microfilm collection of the University of Panama (almost all of which is made up of legajos from the AGI in Sevilla). This I supplemented with additional microfilm orders from Spain. The most important resource I discovered--and one that is fully exploited in the following pages--was the Mapas y Planos section of the AGI. Contained there are hundreds of maps detailing the defense of the isthmus through the entire colonial era. These maps and plans are of great value not only because they present in clear terms the plans and constructions of the various fortifications of Panama, but because the documents in which they were included summarize information hard to find

elsewhere. I believe that the most valuable contribution this study makes is the presentation of over 100 of these plans, together with detailed explanations of what they represent. Accordingly, this dissertation represents a basic data source for other students of Caribbean defenses.

In addition to basic historical research, I have undertaken informal but enlightening surveys of the various sites discussed. It is only from my walking the jungles of Portobelo, for example, that a clear picture of the bahia's defense problems emerges; it is only from my explorations at Nombre de Dios that I was able to locate the small fortification built in the late sixteenth century; and it was only by being bitten by genuine Portobelo mosquitoes and the resulting two week stay in a hospital that I came to a first hand understanding of just how deadly the north coast of Panama can be.

The original outline of this study called for a short introduction detailing the economic history of the isthmus--the main emphasis being the story of Panama's fortifications. I thought then, and think now, that it is essential that the reader understand why Panama was a strategic center of the New World empire, not just how it was defended. As things often do, the economic aspect of my research ballooned, growing into two lengthy chapters numbering over 200 pages. Hence, although the first part of this study still provides

an introduction to the second, this dissertation as finished is as much a study of economic as military history.

In the first chapter I have devoted space to the study of the European politics of Imperial Spain from the reign of Charles V to the mid eighteenth century. These pages, I hope, serve to illustrate why Spain needed the bullion resources of its New World colonies. This chapter also details the means by which the Spanish crown got American silver from Peru and Mexico to Sevilla and Madrid. The Carrera de Indias, as the fleet and mercantile organization of the Spanish Atlantic economy came to be called, is examined in some detail, especially insofar as the Isthmus of Panama is concerned. Mule routes, the Portobelo fairs, isthmian merchants, items traded, and the problem presented by smugglers are only some of the issues explored in the last part of chapter one.

The second chapter, "The Isthmian Economy II: The Cycles of Exchange," presents a year-by-year analysis of the Panamanian economy from the mid-1550s to the end of the colonial era. Detailed tables supplement the narrative. Though the chapter is heavy going, readers interested in specific periods can quickly turn to the appropriate tables to extract useful information. While much of the data presented in this chapter has been published elsewhere, information covering the entire colonial period is gathered

together for the first time here. A general summary of the fluctuations of the Panamanian economy is contained in the chapter's last pages.

The second and larger part of the dissertation details the history of isthmian fortifications. In addition to basic chronologies of constructions, these chapters serve as general outlines of Panamanian history. Invasions, catastrophies, relocations, etc., are explored in some detail, often revising popular myth through the presentation of more accurate information. It is the second part of the study that contains the numerous maps and plans from Seville and Madrid. Most of the chapters dealing with defense begin with a short summary, then present strategic and tactical military information, and are concluded with a narrative of an invasion that tested the defenses discussed.

The third chapter--which once served as the foundation chapter for my master's thesis--explores the late sixteenth-century history of Nombre de Dios and the founding of Portobelo in 1597. Much of the information in this chapter centers on the activities of Juan Bautista Antonelli and his early defense recommendations. The chapter concludes with an analysis of William Parker's 1601 attack on the city. Chapter four picks up the Portobelo story from the year 1600 and chronicles the construction of the town's major fortifications. Like chapter three, it too concludes with an attack--this time Morgan's 1668 sack.

The fifth chapter takes the story to Chagres and across the isthmus to Old Panama. The period 1570 to 1671 is discussed, the Morgan invasion of 1671 providing the backdrop for an analysis as to why isthmian defenses again failed. The next chapter covers the suprisingly vigorous response orchestrated by Charles II's government to correct Panama's defense problems. Movements of whole cities, erection of walled fortifications and construction of new castles and riverine forts are noted and examined. Chapter seven presents information relating to the eighteenth century defenses, much space being devoted to Vernon's 3 invasions in the 1740s. This eighteenth-century material is not explored as thoroughly as the seventeenth-century data. Instead, the eighteenth-century history of Panamanian defenses is presented almost as an epilogue to earlier greatness.

Indeed, this dissertation is primarily a study of the seventeenth century, for that was Panama's period of splendor. Even so, the bracket dates of this study span a period of almost 300 years--far longer than the scope of most dissertations. Given the state of Panamaian historiography, however, I think this is appropriate, the detailed studies of individual forts of specific and narrow periods best being served through other fora. Because of this broad sweep, some pages present more synthesis than new information. When this is the case I have engaged in appropriately extended

bibliographic endeavors. The notes to each chapter present a wealth of bibliographic information--they are a very useful guide for the further study of colonial Panama. Personally, the presentation of this dissertation represents the end of an enjoyable period of study, just as it signals the beginning of another, more challenging one. Finally, Panama is getting the recognition it deserves as a proliferation of publications relating to the isthmus begin to emerge out of the 1987-88 Noriega scandals. I am glad that I was in on the ground floor.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
PREFACE.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	xiv
THE ISTHMIAN ECONOMY I: STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION.....	1
Spain and the Balance of Power in Europe, 1516-1714..	2
The Era of Charles V.....	2
The Reign of Philip II.....	7
The Seventeenth Century.....	13
The Carrera de Indias.....	22
Routes and Ships.....	23
Carrera Administration.....	27
Carrera Taxation.....	30
The Isthmus of Panama.....	33
Roads and Rivers.....	39
The River Route.....	42
The Land Route.....	45
Mules and Mule Trains.....	47
The Portobelo Fairs.....	54
Origins and Organization.....	55
Merchandise.....	60
Merchants.....	71
Smuggling.....	78
Notes.....	88
THE ISTHMIAN ECONOMY II: THE CYCLES OF EXCHANGE.....	112
Sources and Strategies.....	113
The Course of Isthmian Commerce.....	121
The Early Years, 1537-1579.....	121
The Mature Carrera, 1580-1646.....	140
The Years of Decline, 1646-1682.....	188
The Final Collapse, 1682-1739.....	206
The New Economy.....	216
Economic Cycles in the Panamanian Economy.....	221
Notes.....	232

	<u>Page</u>
✓THE FOUNDATION AND FORTIFICATION OF PORTOBELLO.....	256
Tierra Firme in the Last Quarter of the Sixteenth Century.....	257
Antonelli and Portobelo.....	266
Sir Francis Drake, the First Forts, and Hernando de Montoya.....	275
William Parker's Attack, 1601.....	288
Notes.....	294
✓THE DEFENSES OF EARLY SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PORTOBELLO....	304
Castillo Santiago de la Gloria.....	304
Alterations and Reconstructions, 1607-1640.....	311
Castillo San Gerónimo.....	326
Henry Morgan and the English Attack of 1668.....	332
Notes.....	352
FORTIFICATIONS OF THE RIO CHAGRES AND PANAMA CITY, 1570-1671.....	360
Years of Neglect, 1536-1587.....	361
Initial Activity: The Era of Antonelli.....	362
Adjustments and Reconstructions, 1600-1671.....	366
The Fall of San Lorenzo.....	375
The Expedition to Panama.....	382
Panama.....	386
Notes.....	398
PANAMA'S DEFENSES IN THE LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, 1668-1700.....	408
The Sharp Invasion, 1679.....	409
Further Problems with the Buccaneers.....	411
The Strategic Response to Continued Incursions.....	413
Fortifications of Panama City and the Río Chagre....	415
The New Panama.....	419
San Lorenzo and the Río Chagres.....	436
Portobelo: The San Cristóbal Project.....	441
The Scottish Empire in America.....	457
The End of the Century; the End of an Era.....	469
Notes.....	470

	<u>Page</u>
PANAMA AND THE NEW CENTURY: 1702-1819.....	480
The Panamanian Fortifications in the Early Eighteenth Century.....	482
The First Vernon Expedition, 1739.....	494
Subsequent English Expeditions Against Panama.....	510
Imperial Epilogue.....	518
Portobelo.....	518
The Río Chagres and San Lorenzo.....	530
Panama City.....	539
Notes.....	543
 CONCLUSIONS.....	 552
Tactical Conclusions.....	552
Strategic Conclusions.....	558
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 563
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	586

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During the colonial era, geography made Panama one of the important centers of the Spanish New World empire. Between 1537 and 1739, thousands of merchant vessels and royal galleons arrived at Portobelo to conduct the largest commercial fair in the Americas. Because of these fairs, the Spanish crown spent millions of pesos for the construction of fortifications at Portobelo, the Río Chagres, and Panama City.

Despite these fortifications, the isthmus was successfully attacked many times by northern European interlopers. After the buccanneer attacks of the late seventeenth century, Panama's fortifications were strengthened. In the eighteenth century, Panama lost much of its strategic significance as trade routes changed. Even so, Panama remained one of the primary targets of English contraband and military activity up through the War of

Jenkins' Ear. By the end of the eighteenth century, Panama was an insignificant corner of the Hispanic World Empire.

Through the study of economic and military history, this study presents an in-depth overview of Panama's colonial history. Many Spanish colonial maps and plans are included.

THE ISTHMIAN ECONOMY I:
STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

Centered in Castile, the Hispanic World Empire fused elements of past and future into a cohesive bridge linking the medieval empire of God to the era of the nation state.¹ The emergence of the Hapsburg monarchy as the dominant force in the European balance of power occurred so early in the modern period--most imperial institutions were largely in place by the mid-sixteenth century--that it was only natural that the historic edifices of Aragonese and Castilian political development cast long shadows across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Indeed, in areas of economics, politics, diplomacy, religion, and learning, the Hispanic World Empire seemed more adept at renovation and adjustment than at innovation and development. For a time, for almost exactly two centuries after 1516, the union of past and present served to maintain the stability of the state, largely owing to colonizing efforts that served to focus some of the resources of a little-explored world on an otherwise

poorly endowed metropolis. Indeed, it was the mineral resources of the Americas that allowed the Spanish state to embark on the European adventures that characterized Hapsburg foreign policy. Had the yearly influx of treasure from Peru and Mexico not been the bounteous dividend of the exploration of the New World, no doubt the history of Spain, and of early modern Europe, would have been quite different.

Spain and the Balance of Power in Europe, 1516-1714

An essential introduction to the history of the economy of Tierra Firme is a review of Spanish political activity in Europe during the early modern era. This provides clear demonstration of the important role the fruits of the New World played in the history of the Old. And, since the American isthmus was a vital link in the network that delivered to Spain treasures rich and powers unlimited, Panama's significance in the imperial scheme of things stands out sharply against the vivid backdrop of Hapsburg activism.

The Era of Charles V

The year 1516 saw the beginning of one of the most remarkable reigns in European history. It was then that Charles of Hapsburg became king of Castile and Aragon. Not long after, in 1519, he also became Holy Roman Emperor, and this, together with his other hereditary lands, made him the closest thing to a universal monarch since the ninth century when Charlemagne's armies ruled from Rome to Aachen. In this

sense, the reign of Charles V represented the near culmination of a basic tenet of the medieval era: after all, the most far-reaching manifestation of the search for order in a chaotic world was the forging of a universal monarchy on earth to work hand in hand for the glory of the universal God.

By the sixteenth century, however, not everyone saw God's gain in Hapsburg expansion, or for that matter in the unity of the Church. Principal among those that thwarted Charles V in his imperial endeavors were jealous French kings, reform-minded German Christians, and militant Islamic infidels. Interestingly enough, had Charles not been successful in his 1519 bid for the crown of central Europe, each of these areas of concern would not have played dominant roles in shaping his reign. Had he not been the Holy Roman Emperor, the problem of what to do about the unfolding German Reformation and the threat to the Church that it entailed would have been someone else's to tackle; had he not been the Holy Roman Emperor, the conflict with Turkish sultans would have been limited to policing against piracy on the Spanish periphery; and, most of all, had he not been Holy Roman Emperor, Charles would not have faced constant opposition from Valois France's Francis I, who never forgot that he himself might have become Holy Roman Emperor but for Hapsburg ability to raise more money on behalf of the imperial

electors. On top of all this was genuine fear in many quarters--especially in Paris and Rome--that Hapsburg secular power threatened the extinction of political diversity and religious sovereignty. Would the Roman Church become little more than a tool of the Hapsburg state? Would France and other independent countries find themselves powerless before Hapsburg dictates?²

These were the primary areas of friction that produced tension and warfare in early sixteenth-century Europe. They were still essentially medieval concerns. Opposition to Charles was so strong in French quarters that Francis I made a pact with the devil himself--then named Suleiman the Magnificent, the Turkish sultan--in order to wrest control of the Mediterranean from Spain and its allies. The series of wars between Francis and Charles were fought principally in northern Italy, a region that had political and economic ties to both Spain and France. The Italian Wars, as they came to be called, were a significant drain on the resources of both monarchies, though before 1559 neither party could claim unilateral victory. To be sure, France failed to break the Hapsburg noose that seemed poised to strangle Valois power, but on the other hand, Charles seemed ever unable to draw the Hapsburg noose tight enough to end active French opposition to his ambitions. On the negative side, the wars left France divided and its exchequer empty, and contributed to the internal strife of the later sixteenth century that

temporarily made France no more than a minor factor in the competition for European hegemony. The Hapsburgs, too, suffered from the war because resources that could have been directed toward ending the civil war in Germany were squandered as the Reformation progressed.

On the other great front, the Mediterranean, Charles V also faced expensive, time consuming, military activity. Here, too, only limited success could be claimed. It so happened that during Charles' reign in Europe, the Ottoman Turks were suddenly energized through able leadership to undertake rapid expansion in southeastern Europe and in North Africa. As Holy Roman Emperor, it was Charles' duty to come to the defense of Christendom against the infidel. To this end he was able to create alliances with Rome and Venice that, together with heavy Spanish fiscal and military support, were able to check the westward movement of the Turks. The battle for supremacy on Europe's southern front, however, was not ended by any dramatic victory during Charles' tenure, and thus open conflict on the Mediterranean continued unabated, the final outcome very much in question.

But it was in Germany that Charles suffered his greatest disappointment. Almost from the beginning of his reign he was faced by a revolt against the church, and by the late 1520s it was apparent that serious conflict could not be avoided. And so, Germany was torn in a civil war that pitted

Charles and the Church against Luther and the reformers. Even though some periods of peace interrupted the violence of conflict, after 1519 Charles could never count on the unswerving loyalty of much of the Empire. Moreover, a land that had once been more than self sufficient insofar as finances were concerned, now loomed as a vast chasm that presented a fiscal nightmare as ducat after ducat was pumped into failed attempts to preserve the peace or defeat the foe. Because of his other imperial and hereditary obligations, Charles was never able to muster enough resources to end the religious revolt, and if his ostensible goal was the reunification of the faith, his policy toward Germany resulted in failure.

Against this tapestry of blood and death, a faint glimmer of hope began to glow far away in the newly discovered Americas. As far back as the 1490s, Ferdinand and Isabella realized that the Indies Columbus had dropped at their most catholic feet presented an opportunity for greatness, the potential of which no one could accurately judge. Suddenly, in the early 1520s, Charles got word from Cortez that unimagined wealth existed in Mexico, and in the 1530s news arrived of the discovery and conquest of the even richer kingdom of Peru. Although wealth began to pour into Castile in the 1530s and 1540s, the amounts were still small and provided Charles with only small benefit. In point

of fact, it was not until the reign of his son, Philip II, that the wealth of the Indies began to make a significant impact upon Spanish activity in Europe.

The Reign of Philip II

In 1556 Charles abdicated in favor of his son, Philip, who then became King of Spain until his death in 1598. In the act of abdication Charles forever closed the doors leading to a universal monarchy when he separated the Holy Roman Empire from his Spanish possessions.³ Freed from the weighty encumbrances of central European entanglements, Philip stood poised to achieve Spanish political and cultural hegemony across western Europe to an extent that had not been possible during the tenure of his father. To be sure, Spanish subsidies continued to flow from Castile to Catholic forces in Germany, but from 1556 onward, the Holy Roman Empire, controlled by the Austrian branch of the Hapsburg house, never again served as an unquenchable sponge absorbing whatever fiscal surpluses Spanish administrators were able to gather. Another of Charles' great problems--France--also became less significant during Philip's era, having become torn by social and military strife as a result of the Wars of Religion. It would only be well after the emergence of a new French dynasty that France again was able to exert meaningful force in international affairs.

Philip, however, did not inherit an empire free of troubles. In the Mediterranean, the Ottoman empire still threatened to overcome Christian forces from North Africa to Italy and Spain. Again it fell upon Spain to defend the Mediterranean front against the Turks. To this end, and partly because he was free of other significant entanglements, Philip was able to concentrate such forces as were necessary to curtail the Ottoman threat, and in 1571 at Lepanto, his forces achieved a significant victory when they destroyed the Sultan's navy. Just as the Mediterranean crisis was resolving itself, however, a new problem was unfolding in the Spanish Low Countries. By the time of Lepanto, open revolt against Spanish rule was sweeping the Dutch cities, not just out of resentment at being ruled by a Spanish king (Charles had come from Flanders), but also because of revolutionary anti-catholic sentiment fueled by happenings in Germany. Thus, events in the Low Countries caused a shift in emphasis from southern to northern Europe at the mid-point in Philip's reign. Unfortunately, the Dutch problem was not resolved as handily as the Turkish one, and by the mid 1580s Tudor England was being drawn into the crisis. Thus, whatever benefits Philip gained through inheriting Spain without Germany, he lost them as new problems replaced older ones.

Unlike his father, however, Philip was able to draw on New World resources to help finance his European ambitions.

The opening of Potosí and the Mexican silver mines came just in time: already, in 1557 and 1575 Philip had been forced to declare imperial bankruptcy, thus undermining both crown credit and the emerging national economy--and this was before the expensive war in the Netherlands had really begun. Another bankruptcy followed in 1596, demonstrating that even the impressive additions to the treasury made by the Americas were insufficient to finance an activist agenda for European dominance. Table 1-1 presents figures representing these imports (tables 1-2 and 1-3 present the South American portion that was brought through Panama--still insignificant in the total context until the time of Philip III). Thus during the reign of Philip II, something like 51,285,932 ducats (of 375 maravedís) in royal silver alone were imported (private returns being five to six times that amount).⁴ These imports represented about 10 percent of the crown income in the 1560s, rising to about 20 percent by the end of the reign. The significance of this influx is even greater than statistics indicate. Most crown revenue came from taxes levied on the peasantry of Castile. Accordingly, much of this revenue came in less than desirable forms such as payments in kind or, at best, in copper currency (vellón) that was not accepted outside the Spanish domestic economy. Raw silver from America, on the other hand, was hard currency that could be used to pay foreign debts, imperial subsidies,

Table 1-1

Imports of Royal Treasure in Ducats, 1503-1660

Period	Amount	Period	Amount
1503-1505	116,660	1581-1585	9,060,725
1506-1510	256,625	1586-1590	9,651,855
1511-1515	375,882	1591-1595	12,028,018
1516-1520	312,261	1596-1600	13,169,182
1521-1525	42,183	1601-1605	7,823,863
1526-1530	326,485	1606-1610	10,259,615
1531-1635	518,833	1611-1615	8,655,506
1536-1540	1,621,062	1616-1620	5,217,346
1541-1545	909,346	1621-1625	5,869,387
1546-1550	1,911,206	1626-1630	5,542,561
1551-1555	4,354,208	1631-1635	5,680,589
1556-1560	1,882,195	1636-1640	5,629,564
1561-1565	2,183,440	1641-1645	5,723,394
1566-1570	4,541,692	1646-1650	1,998,135
1571-1575	3,958,393	1651-1655	2,686,654
1576-1580	7,979,614	1656-1660	727,829

Total: 140,863,304

Source: Based on tables in John Elliott, Imperial Spain 1469-1716 (New York, 1963) p. 175 and Earl J. Hamilton, American Treasure and the Price Revolution in Spain, 1501-1650, (Cambridge, MA, 1934) p. 34.

Table 1-2

Royal Treasure shipped through Panama from Peru, 1551-1739
(in pesos ensayados)

Year	Amount	Year	Amount	Year	Amount
1551	104,948	1609	2,062,060	1650	3,467,110
1552	--	1610	1,923,985	1651	1,782,514
1553	393,886	1611	930,833	1652	1,114,847
1554	248,100	1612	2,203,287	1653	1,004,908
1555	--	1613	2,353,189	1654	1,775,887
1556	150,080	1614	2,160,574	1655	604,444
1559	212,697	1615	2,119,091	1656	725,585
1560	314,013	1616	2,543,299	1657	785,782
1561	--	1617	1,726,542	1658	441,674
1562	214,801	1618	1,648,578	1659	684,619
1563	--	1619	1,255,580	1660	1,110,622
1565	--	1620	346,621	1661	995,211
1566	344,564	1621	414,767	1662	932,401
1567	--	1622	715,152	1664	1,027,910
1568	317,789	1623	1,063,822	1665	60,459
1570	159,474	1624	1,043,876	1666	930,325
1571	230,161	1625	--	1669	1,330,415
1572	97,116	1626	2,718,640	1672	806,336
1573	--	1627	1,492,712	1675	1,110,458
1574	215,228	1628	785,778	1678	1,395,058
1575	308,086	1629	727,679	1681	821,289
1576	107,629	1630	1,500,760	1685	646,272
1577	1,800,307	1632	906,667	1690	452,896
1578	352,266	1633	1,088,000	1696	508,997
1579	678,835	1634	1,329,778	1707	820,761
1580	1,000,711	1635	2,400,228	1708	181,333
1581	987,878	1636	1,208,889	1717	36,292
1583	--	1637	2,041,083	1718	10,498
1585	952,889	1638	1,329,778	1722	18,375
1587	300,000	1639	1,450,667	1725	122,098
1591	800,000	1640	1,208,889	1726	60,444
1600	1,477,490	1641	1,208,889	1728	362,667
1601	1,208,333	1642	3,382,974	1729	241,778
1602	1,154,167	1643	2,715,302	1730	182,524
1603	1,154,167	1644	3,888,510	1732	120,889
1604	916,667	1645	2,156,977	1733	120,889
1605	1,151,318	1646	2,243,434	1735	120,889
1606	856,357	1647	1,664,471	1737	145,671
1607	2,239,438	1648	1,244,066	1739	354,230
1608	1,045,629	1649	--		

Source: Figures compiled by Alfredo Castillero Calvo in Economía terciaria y sociedad Panamá siglos XVI y XVII (Panama, 1980) pp. 51-57.

Table 1-3

Registered Private Silver Shipped Through Panama, 1531-1660
(in pesos ensayados)

Period	Amount	Period	Amount
1531-1535	1,237,673	1596-1600	22,034,240
1536-1540	1,457,020	1601-1605	15,374,097
1541-1545	1,733,902	1606-1610	19,785,280
1546-1550	2,148,397	1611-1615	15,943,278
1551-1555	4,932,756	1616-1620	19,271,974
1556-1560	3,999,499	1621-1625	16,206,407
1561-1565	5,827,919	1626-1630	19,838,849
1566-1570	7,070,608	1631-1635	13,432,020
1571-1575	4,643,578	1636-1640	9,788,761
1576-1580	9,833,606	1641-1645	10,460,490
1581-1585	19,093,498	1646-1650	9,181,027
1586-1590	14,299,578	1651-1655	4,668,011
1591-1595	23,925,707	1656-1660	2,083,892

Total: 278,272,076 pesos ensayados

Source: Figures compiled by Alfredo Castellero Calvo in Economía terciaria y sociedad Panamá siglos XVI y XVII (Panama, 1980) pp. 51-57.

and most important of all, mercenaries and Spaniards fighting outside the peninsula. The great influx of bullion, however, was spent even before its yearly arrival on the Sevillian docks. Foreign bankers like the Fuggers financed Spain's government, collecting interest and capital upon the arrival of the fleets from America. The peasants and churches of Castile bore most of the imperial tax burden, but it was the added bonus of New World bullion that made Spanish foreign policy possible because it provided the crown with most of its needed hard currency.

The Seventeenth Century

The fortunes of Spanish history are generally seen to have undergone a great shift with the death of Philip II, the seventeenth century being regarded as an era of imperial decline presided over by ineffectual monarchs. Recent scholarship, however, has leached some of the venom from traditional historians' assessment of the late Hapsburg era.⁵ On the whole, however, even revisionists such as J. I. Israel still acknowledge that the Spain of the seventeenth century functioned fiscally, militarily, culturally, and politically, on a lower level than the Spain of Charles V and Philip II. Much of the stagnation and reversal in imperial fortunes stemmed from the fact that Castile and the rest of the Spanish peninsula had undergone an economic and demographic crisis in the closing years of the sixteenth century when the

demands of the monarchy broke the back of rural peasantry and agriculture. Taxation drove farmers into the cities where the plague then flourished, fueled by the influx. Thus, as Philip III began his reign, the countryside was empty and the cities overcrowded with the poor and sick.⁶ In short, the basic Castilian agricultural economy that had provided the financial foundation for the Hapsburg state had crumbled. The government of Philip III, under the direction of the Duke of Lerma, discerned the crisis and accordingly sharply scaled back Spanish adventures in Europe, the most significant manifestation of this redirection being the eleven-year truce negotiated in 1609 with the Dutch rebels.⁷ For a time freed from its obligations in the Low Countries, the crown could allocate its few resources toward suppressing a resurgent Turkish threat in North Africa. During this era of fiscal tightness, American silver imports assumed an even larger portion of the imperial budget. During Philip III's tenure (he reigned from 1598 to 1621, but because of the five-year divisions of the data set imports from 1596 to 1620 have been used), some 45,125,512 ducats were imported from the Americas (see tables 1-1 through 1-3), some 32,477,205⁸ pesos of which came from South America through Panama. Thus, the yearly average amount of silver imported during Philip III's reign (1.4 million pesos) was as great or slightly greater than during the tenure of Philip II (1.3 million pesos). For the purposes of this study, however, the

most telling observation is that the Peruvian contribution to the treasury clearly surpassed the Mexican during this period--a trend that would continue well into the eighteenth century, and thus providing a partial explanation for Panama's growing significance as a strategic center of the empire.

The military timidity of Lerma and Philip III was replaced in 1621 by a return to an activist policy when Philip IV inherited the crown. He and his favorite, the Andalusian magnate Olivares, quickly steered Spain back to a war footing by both renewing the Spanish effort to regain control of the Low Countries and by entering the Thirty Years War against France.⁹ The reign of Philip IV was one of the most interesting in Spanish history, and one that clearly demonstrates the dependence of the Spanish peninsula on its New World colonies for fiscal support. When such support was forthcoming and timely, Spanish military and political fortunes were generally high, but in the 1640s and 1650s when clear decline in silver imports set in (for reasons discussed in subsequent chapters), Spanish influence and power collapsed, this time never to recover. So telling are these events--this story of apex and nadir--that a more detailed discussion is justified.

The reign of Philip IV can be divided into two distinct periods, the division coming in 1640, that great year of

imperial crisis. The pre-1640 years saw Olivares and his program of renewed activism predominant; the post-1640 period saw the acknowledgment of collapse and Spanish retreat toward secondary power status. New World silver imports, moreover, also fall into a similar division, though the collapse in public returns occurred later, in the mid-1640s. Indeed, the period 1641-1645 saw the arrival of 13,353,652 pesos¹⁰ from Panama, though Hamilton reports only a little over 5,000,000 ducats in total royal imports. American silver amounted to only about ten percent of the royal income during Philip IV's reign, but as in the case in earlier years, "when it arrived, it was ready cash, immediately available for use; and in a period of debased currency an income in silver was particularly valuable to the crown for its overseas payments..."

During the last years of Philip III's reign, imports from the Americas and other crown income had remained at stable levels (the most recent bankruptcy had been declared in 1607), thus providing Olivares with reasonable expectations for future income. This, as much as anything, prodded Spain into refusing to extend the 1609 Dutch truce which had expired the same year Philip IV came to power. Olivares saw the Dutch revolt as one of the causes of continued Spanish lethargy--after all, the Low Countries were one of Spain's richest possessions and thus represented a potential gold mine for the crown. War, therefore, again

broke out in this region in 1621, but Spanish military activity was reduced to a minimum because shipwrecks in 1621 and 1622 caused a significant decline in imports of cash and thus, military activity was "unspectacular."¹¹ But, the following year, as Lynch notes,

both fleets reached Spain safely with one of the largest bullion deliveries in the history of the Indies trade. There was nothing wrong with the Spanish army in the Low Countries that money could not repair. Now, with money available, Spinola led it to a spectacular success in May 1625 when he captured Breda after a ten-month siege.¹²

Also, at the same time, Spain undertook a massive campaign in Brazil to oust the Dutch from Bahia. Some 52 ships with 12,566 men were sent out under Don Fadrique de Toledo, causing the Dutch garrison to surrender during the same month that Breda fell.¹³ These successes were soon balanced somewhat when England renewed hostilities against Spain. Spanish optimism, however, was so great following the victories in Brazil and the Low Countries, and finances was so sound, that Olivares seriously considered launching an all out invasion of England akin to the 1588 attempt. But soon Spanish imports of bullion from the Indies was on the decline and operations--not to mention plans for future operations--were drastically scaled down.¹⁴ Spain went on the defensive. The year 1627 saw a larger return, and immediately Olivares chose to go back on the offensive. But fortunes were again

reversed in 1628 when the Dutchman Piet Heyn captured the Mexican Flota off Matanzas, Cuba, throwing Spanish finances into chaos. After this disaster even Spinola thought that a new truce with the Dutch was the only way out of the fiscal pit into which Spain had jumped.¹⁵ Ironically, instead of paying for the final destruction of the Dutch insurgents, the 1628 Flota treasure went on to pay for Holland's renewed invasion and occupation of north eastern Brazil.

Rather than follow Spinola's advice, Olivares refused to negotiate with the Dutch, and, in 1628 he expanded Spain's role in the then raging European conflict by initiating the War of Mantua in an effort to preempt French hegemony in northern Italy. Like the sixteenth-century Italian Wars between Charles V and Francis I, this too proved to be an expensive exercise that resulted in stalemate. As Lynch writes,

The Italian front swallowed up all the crown's returns from the Indies and a good portion of private returns. Of the 3 million ducats of private revenue brought on the Tierra Firme fleet in 1629 the crown laid its hands on 1 million and added it to its own 800,000 for immediate dispatch to Italy. In 1630 the crown received about 1.8 million ducats from the two fleets, a healthy sum for the time, which together with a "loan" of half a million from Seville merchants also disappeared in defense costs. In 1631 about 5 million ducats of American treasure went to the bottom of the sea through shipwreck.¹⁶ The Italian war had been no less wasteful.

Throughout the 1630s, royal income from domestic taxation continued to fall (from 20,000,000 pesos in 1626-1630 to 11,000,000 in 1636-1640), though treasure from the Americas continued to arrive at levels usually exceeding 1,000,000 pesos per year (over 2,000,000 in 1635 and 1637).¹⁷

In the wake of the unfolding fiscal crisis, peace was made with England and France in 1630-1631, but the unstable conditions in central Europe made these treaties uncertain and, indeed, war was raging again by 1634.

If the 1630s was a bad decade for Spain, the year 1640 was worse. It was then that Spain's last gasp to regain its former glory expired, and the Olivares regime with it. Leading up to 1640, the financial strain of the 1630s--made more significant by a dramatic fall in private returns from America--led Olivares to undertake the reorganization of the Spanish peninsula through a tighter association between the peripheral kingdoms (Catalonia and Portugal, particularly) and Castile. Castile had dominated Spanish affairs since the days of Ferdinand and Isabella, but the minor peripheral kingdoms still enjoyed special privileges, especially insofar as taxation was concerned. Olivares resented the fact that Castile and its New World empire were forced to foot the entire Spanish war effort, while the peripheral regions contributed little or nothing. Indeed, the financial drain of constant war was now beyond Castile's capacity to fill.

Spain's future imperial greatness depended on the crown's ability to raise needed resources from all of its territories. Olivares' program, the Union of Arms, was designed to end the almost federal relationship between the Spanish regions by once and for all asserting Castilian hegemony in all affairs, but particularly in matters of the fisc. Such action, however, brought full scale civil war to Spain when both Catalonia and Portugal declared independence from the Spanish crown.¹⁸ This, more than the raging conflict in Europe, was a threat to Spain's very existence, as the French clearly saw when they joined the conflict on the side of Catalonia. Whatever efforts Philip IV attempted to make to restore the political integrity of the peninsula were undercut by a series of famines and plagues that raged across Valencia and southern Spain. Food riots overshadowed enthusiasm for war. It was not until the king himself took command of the army in Aragon that the tide of war in Catalonia turned, though complete victory was still some years off. Needless to say, whatever influence and power Spain had wielded across Europe now faded as the crown turned its attention south of the Pyrenees. Even after Olivares was ousted and the Union of Arms scheme abandoned, conflict raged in the revolting provinces, absorbing whatever financial assets the crown could muster, including the nearly 20,000,000 pesos shipped from Panama to Spain between 1641 and 1650. The bullion shortage had an important impact on

Catholic fortunes in Germany as well, because financial subsidies to the Holy Roman Empire were suddenly cut short. This, together with the removal of most Spanish military support, helped lead to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, an event that not only left the Dutch fully independent and France the dominant European power, but which also forever ended Catholic efforts to regain control of north central Europe.

Spain's fortunes fell still further in the late 1640s and 1650s as both private and public silver returns from America dropped. Even the Peruvian contribution to peninsular finances fell below 1,000,000 pesos per year after 1654, an amount above which they rose only 5 times between 1660 and 1739. These declines were compounded by the failure of the flotas to reach Spain in 1656 and 1657 when they were lost to storms and the English, respectively. These twin disasters, considered at the time to be as significant as the loss of a major battle, directly led to the 1659 peace of the Pyrenees which was, if anything, Spain's final acknowledgement that other powers were to star on the
19
European stage.

The unfortunate reign of Charles II (1655-1700) saw Spain reach its political and economic nadir, though recent scholarship indicates that some degree of economic recovery
20
was underway as early as the 1680s. Even so, New World

silver played a very small role during the last decades of the century, public imports from Peru through Panama amounting to only 8,062,505 pesos between 1665 and 1700. Of this small total, only 2,429,427 pesos arrived after 1680. The yearly Atlantic crossings that had provided essential support for earlier reigns gave way to infrequent commerce—a theme explored in more detail in the following chapter.

The end of the seventeenth century also signaled the end of Panama's vital importance to the economic structure of the Hispanic world. The collapse in the Indies commerce—at least the South American leg of it—propelled the isthmus into obscurity. Some effort was made during the reign of Philip V to reinvigorate the Indies trade, but with the exception of limited expansion in the export sector of the New Spain economy towards the middle of the century, these endeavors were resoundingly unsuccessful. For almost two centuries, however, the Hispanic New World had provided a sound fiscal foundation for the Spain's ambitions in Europe. If that era passed with the end of Hapsburg rule in Spain, it

21

was after a long and glorious history.

The Carrera De Indias

All those coveted bags of silver did not float up the Guadalquivir on their own, however. Quite the contrary: from the early sixteenth century on, a complex and burdensome trade superstructure tied the Old World to the New, the

principal feature of which was a bloated bureaucracy that stood guard over poorly crafted mercantilist rules and regulations. So massive in scope was the Spanish Carrera de Indias, as the regular sailings of fleets between Sevilla and the New World ports came to be called, that it came to dominate the Atlantic economy for two centuries.²²

Nearly all aspects of the carrera, from the organization of consulados and trade fairs, to the ships that plied the sea lanes, to the Casa de Contratación itself, were based on institutions and theories that grew out of the Iberian past. Just as the precursor of the Portobelo fairs can be found in celebrations at Burgos and in the Champagne, the genesis of the Atlantic carrera can be found in the late medieval Mediterranean, where Italian trading cities like Venice and Genoa had used structured convoys in trade for centuries.²³ But if the dangerous waters of the Mediterranean inspired the convoy structure, it was the growing realization that in wealth lay imperial power that led to the tightly knit monopoly system which very quickly came to characterize the Spanish commercial apparatus.

Routes and Ships

The basic geographical framework of the carrera, as mentioned previously, was geared toward tight state control of all commercial relations between Spain and America.²⁴ With its European leg based in Sevilla (and later Cádiz), the

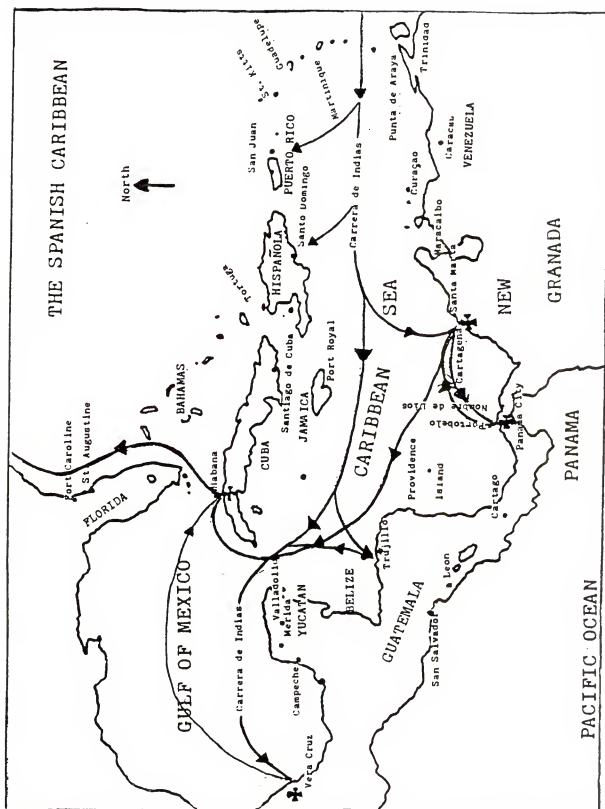


Figure 1-1 The Spanish Caribbean

organization of the carrera provided that only select ports in the Americas--Portobelo (Nombre de Dios to 1597), Cartagena, Veracruz, and Habana--were legally permitted to participate in international commerce. Into these ports flowed the merchandise of Europe; through them was funneled the wealth of Mexico and Peru. Trade fairs were held in Portobelo and Veracruz, each the ultimate stop on the westward voyage of the fleets, until the demise of the carrera system in the early eighteenth century. The structures that characterized the Indies trade evolved over the course of the sixteenth century, attaining final form in the 1560s under the direction of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés.

As indicated on figure 1-1, a map of the trade routes in the Caribbean, fleets sailing outbound from Spain entered New World waters through the Lesser Antillies and then, depending on whether the destination was Panama or New Spain, they sailed directly to Cartagena or Veracruz.²⁵ Once the Tierra Firme fleets arrived in Cartagena, word was sent south to Peru so that the Armada del Sur, as the Pacific fleets were called, could sail north to the Isthmus for the celebration of the trade fair in Portobelo. During the great years of the carrera (before 1650), the Armadas del Sur often sailed north before news of the Sevilla fleet had arrived, but when imperial commercial affairs became more uncertain, and as

years rather than months began to separate sailings from Spain, certainty of timing became an important factor in Peruvian merchants' calculations.²⁶ At any rate, after a brief stay (sometimes lasting several months) in Cartagena, the Tierra Firme fleet then sailed the 122 leagues to Portobelo where the fair was held and the goods of empire exchanged. After the fair was over--it usually lasted about a month--the fleet returned to Cartagena for provisioning and soon sailed again, this time for Habana. At the Cuban port, the Tierra Firme fleet was rejoined by the New Spain flota that by now had loaded itself with Mexican treasure. Together they then sailed back to Andalusia, employing the Gulf Stream for part of the voyage.

Insofar as the fleets themselves are concerned, they varied in size and organization over both time and space. The traditional view of the treasure fleets has been that a fleet called the flota sailed to Panama, and one called the galeones sailed to New Spain. This, however, is misleading. Both flotas and galeones sailed to both ports, though toward the end of the seventeenth century these informal designations began to stick. The two most important types of fleets which called at Portobelo were the Armada y Flota de Tierra Firme and the Armada de la guarda de la Carrera de Indias.²⁷ Insofar as the Portobelo fairs are concerned, the Armada y Flota was the more important of the two in that it mainly consisted of private merchantmen grouped together in

convoy for the protection of private merchandise. Normally several warships accompanied the Armada y Flota as a defensive escort, but they served a dual purpose in that it was on these ships that crown bullion was returned to Spain. The Armada de la Guarda, on the other hand, usually consisted of between six and ten galeones, which, being warships, were often forbidden from participation in private trade.²⁸ The purpose of the Armada de la Guarda originally was to bring back the royal silver accumulated in Panama that was not transported on the Armada y Flota. In the last decades of the sixteenth century, Armadas de la Guarda sailed independently of the Armadas y Flotas, but for the larger part of the seventeenth century the fleets sailed together--not as one fleet, but rather as two fleets in one, with two distinct hierarchical structures with divided jurisdictions. In such cases, the Armada de la Guarda provided the defense escort for the Armada y Flota.

Carrera Administration

The administration of the Carrera was overseen by the Casa de Contratación in Sevilla, which was organized during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella in 1503.²⁹ The primary role of the Casa was to guarantee the timely and regular arrival of silver from the New World. Right behind this were a myriad of other obligations, including providing the regulations that oversaw the Indies trade and their

enforcement. The Casa was also charged with provisioning and equipping the fleets, though after 1607 this duty was charged to other institutions. Finally, the Casa had the responsibility to act as the customs house and tax collector for the crown. In its grand capacity as administration center for the Indies trade, the Casa held the power of appointment for all offices and commissions relating to the carrera. Not only were Captains General of the Armadas cleared through the Casa, but other special officials such as the purveyor-general and the maestre de plata, not to mention all customs officials in the New World monopoly ports were tightly controlled from Sevilla.

Parallel in organization to the Casa de Contratación, were the consulados, or merchant guilds, of Sevilla, Mexico, and Lima.³⁰ Before the mid-seventeenth century the consulados were not directly charged with substantial governmental role, their purpose instead being to serve the merchant communities of the trade centers. First and foremost of the consulados was that of Sevilla, the obligation of which was to collect together the private merchandise for the yearly fleets. After 1613, the Sevilla consulado worked together (or, as was often the case, at odds) with the Lima consulado, which served as the principal clearing house for merchants in South America. Even though the consulados were given few governmental charges in the

early years, by the seventeenth century the crown began to rely more and more on individual merchants and the official merchant organizations in matters such as tax collection, previously under the auspices of the Casa de Contratación. For the most part these measures grew out of the inability of the crown (and the Casa) to effectively guard the carrera against corruption. But by the late seventeenth century when it was acknowledged that the cooperation of the merchants was essential in maintaining the integrity of the Indies trade, such reforms were long overdue, and thus ineffective.

Needless to say, the consulados--especially that of Sevilla--wielded great authority and were frequently able to determine the quantities and qualities of the merchandise shipped on various fleets. It is hardly an overstatement to say that merchants who were not connected to the guild were at a great disadvantage in the struggle to get cargoes on board west bound ships. No group suffered more from the arbitrary actions of the consulado than the merchants of Cádiz, Sevilla's principal rival.³¹ Sevillian merchants, acting through the privileges of the consulado, frequently limited Cádiz' participation in the carrera by limiting the quantity of merchandise that city could ship. Indeed, Sevillian merchants jealously guarded their privileges against all rivals, but especially against Cádiz. After all, Cádiz was far and away a better port than Sevilla, and could thus accommodate ships of a size well in excess of the 500 ton

limit imposed by the shifting sands at San Lúcar at the mouth of the Guadalquivir. Just as the Sevillian consulado members feared, by the mid-seventeenth century the merits of Cádiz as a harbor and as a growing center of international commerce eclipsed Andalusia's first great port, and in 1679 the crown ordered that all ships call at Cádiz rather than at Sevilla. Later, in 1717, the Casa de Contratación itself was moved to Cádiz.

Carrera Taxation

Spanish fiscal organization in the Old World, unlike the well organized and closely supervised carrera, was a quiltwork of laws sewn together with the unstable threads of regional interests: each of the crown's non-Castilian domains had special tax privileges which were held by the peripheral minorities concerned to be at least as sacred as loyalty to the monarchy. By 1600 the Spanish budget was made up of several distinct and rather regular components, including church taxes and donativos, sales taxes, and levies on trade and commerce, the brunt of each borne by Castile. Of these taxes, those attached to the Indies commerce made up only a small part of the national income. From the perspective of Panama, however, they loomed large. For the most part, the crown did not realize any substantial profits from taxes on the carrera--nor was this the intention. Instead, the various taxes were implemented with the aim of making the

carrera self sufficient insofar as defense expenditures and other official expenses were concerned. This was especially true with regard to the avería tax, all the revenue of which was earmarked to outfit the galleon escorts and Armadas de la Guarda.

The avería tax developed in the sixteenth century as it became necessary to send stronger warship escorts to protect the merchant fleets.³² As early as 1587 the tax, assessed on value of merchandise (in Panama where it was high rather than in Sevilla), stood at four percent. It later rose to seven percent, a level at which it remained through the first decades of the seventeenth century.³³

During the 1620s, however, the size of the escort squadrons began to increase in response to the growing power of Spain's European rivals. Between 1620 and 1630, the average size of the Armada de la Guarda was 37 percent of total fleet tonnage.³⁴ In order to pay for this level of protection, the crown raised the avería rates in 1629, contending that private merchants should bear more of the defense burden. Instead of fixing the tax at any specific rate, it was indexed to the cost of the defense escort during any individual year. Accordingly, when defense costs were higher, so too would be the rate of the avería tax. This, however, resulted in wild yearly fluctuations, and rates often so high that merchants were unable to realize profits. In turn, this led merchants to hide more and more of their

trade goods and profits from the crown, thus driving the avería rates higher on declared merchandise. The rate rose in 1629 to 17 percent, doubling again to 31.5 percent in 1630. It fell somewhat during the period 1635 to 1642, averaging 12 to 14 percent. In the mid 1640s it rose slightly again, but it was in the 1650s that the rates³⁵ skyrocketed, rising in 1653 to 99 percent. It was obvious that the system was no longer working, and in 1660 the avería was abolished in favor of a set fee of 790,000 pesos to be³⁶ collected from the merchants of each fleet.

Another important tax was the almojarifazgo, or customs duty. Hamilton reports that the almojarifazgo was first implemented in 1560 by the ever financially strained Philip³⁷ II, but documents from as early as the 1540s indicate it was already being collected at a rate of 7.5 percent on outbound traffic (2.5 percent being collected in Sevilla, 5 percent in the Indies) and 15 percent on goods returning from the New World.³⁸ In 1566 the almojarifazgo was raised again to 15 percent on westbound trade, 17.5 percent on the eastbound run, levels they would remain until the tax reform measures of 1660. On the westbound route, 10 percent³⁹ was collected at Portobelo, 5 percent later in Callao.

The other major tax, the alcabala, or sales tax, was collected on exchanges in Portobelo. The alcabala first appeared on the isthmus in 1582 at a rate of 2 percent. It

was later increased to 4 percent in order to offset the Viceroyalty of Peru's contributions to Olivares' Union of
⁴⁰Arms. Still another tax, the derecho de toneladas, was levied during the seventeenth century at the low rate of 1.5 reales silver on each ton shipped from Spain. Funds from this tax were used to finance the school of navigation in
⁴¹Sevilla.

Tax returns form a major statistical data set for historians. For the study of the Indies trade and the Panamanian economy, they are as valuable today as the funds they represent were in days gone by. Indeed, as will be shown below and in the next chapter, avería, almojarifazgo, and alcabala figures provide important clues to questions relating to the fluctuation of commercial cycles, smuggling, and other issues.

The Isthmus of Panama

Now we come to the consideration of the Isthmus of Panama itself. Early Panamanian history can be divided into four periods: 1510-1519, which saw the conquest and foundation of cities; 1520-1532, which saw the consolidation of Spanish rule, as well as the demise of most of the region's Indian population; 1532-1540, which was the period of mineral (gold and pearls) exploitation, and the era when Panama functioned as a stepping stone for the expeditions of conquest in South America; and 1540 onward, which was the time of the

consolidation of the formal transisthmian economy that endured until the eighteenth century.⁴² It is this last period that is the focus of the remainder of this study.

From the time of its first discovery, Panama presented Spanish settlers with physical obstacles that, if it had not been for the fact that the isthmus was apparently the only viable approach to the South Sea, would have relegated the entire area to backwater status. Panama was not just unpleasant for human habitation, the climate there was deadly. A report dating in 1588, for example, noted that between 1519 and that year, over 46,000 persons had died in Nombre de Dios alone.⁴³ All along the north coast the climate and the health problems it fostered would remain one of the great drawbacks to the livelihood and defense of the isthmus. Extracts from early seventeenth-century descriptions serve to paint a rather dismal picture of the place. One reads:

The climate is very hot. The winds from January to June are strong, but they are sickly due to their high humidity . . . it is so humid here that it rains all year long and owing to this the country is very sickly, suffering from fevers and bloody hemmorrhages which are a great problem⁴⁴

Samuel Champlain, the famous Frenchman who traveled throughout the Indies, wrote:

At . . . Portobelo I found a great change of country, for instead of the very good and fertile land which I had seen in New Spain I

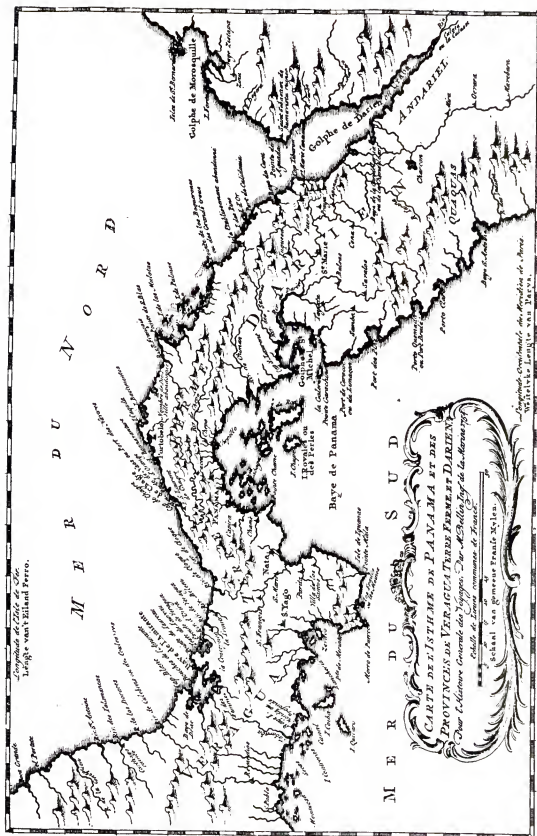


Figure 1-2 Map of Panama (Source: Anderson, p. 256)

found a very bad country; this place of Porto-Bello being the most evil and pitiful residence in the world. It rains there almost always and if the rain ceases for an hour, the heat is so great that the water becomes quite infected, and renders the air contagious.⁴⁵

And a frequently cited description from 1607 reads, in part:

The whole region is very rainy and also hot, humid, and swampy. The winter is the time when the rains continue and the country becomes humid, resulting in droves of water. The temperament and disposition of the air is excessively hot. From the middle of December there begin winds which moderate the heat-- then it is summer, a time which lasts until the end of April.⁴⁶

The diseases which caused the most problems in Panama were malaria and (after the introduction of large numbers of slaves by the mid-sixteenth century) yellow fever. This writer spent seven days in a hospital after only a two-day visit to Portobelo in June of 1984, confirming the validity of these early negative reports. Medicine for the troops and public servants of Panama was always a very large expense for the crown.⁴⁷

Despite the wretched climate, the crown could count on some Spaniards to populate the isthmus, so great was the potential for profit in the transisthmian trade. The number of vecinos in Panama City between 1570 and 1676 is presented in table 1-4, together with those of Portobelo. As can be seen, Panama City always had a much larger population than the north coast terminal. The two reasons for this were

Table 1-4
Vecinos of Panama and Portobelo, 1570-1789

I. Panama

Year	Vecinos	Year	Vecinos
1570	400	1617	400
1575	500	1620	300
1580	300	1621-27	400
1583	300	1628	500
1587	600	1629-62	300
1588	200	1670	550
1594	450	1672	300
1607	550	1676	200
1610	500		

II. Portobelo

Year	Vecinos	Year	Vecinos
1597	40	1679	30
1607	90	1695	10
1617	10	1735	12-30
1620	15	1754	40
1626	30	1778	50
1676	20	1789	35

Source: Alfredo Castellero Calvo, Economía Terciaria (Panama, 1980), pp. 34-39; AGI Panamá 32.

first, Panama City had a much better climate than Nombre de Dios or Portobelo (there it rained only 70 or so inches per year, while in Portobelo over 200 inches fell annually); and second, the Pacific coast was better protected (by geography) from foreign attack.⁴⁸ Even so, by the first years of the seventeenth century, so many vecinos were leaving both Panama City and Portobelo for the more temperate climate of Veragua that the crown was forced to forbid such migrations lest the Spanish population along the trajín route, as the land bridge connecting the Atlantic and Pacific was called, be depleted so much that the security of the province might become endangered.⁴⁹ In addition to the Spanish population, there was a large slave population. Numbers of black slaves rose quickly as the isthmian Indian population fell. By 1575 there were some 2,809 slaves reported on the isthmus, a figure that remained fairly constant until the end of the colonial era.⁵⁰ Almost all of these slaves were connected to the trajín in one way or another, most assigned to tasks such as maintaining the roads or assisting with mule transportation. During times of fortification construction, slaves were either taken off their trajín assignments and reassigned to engineers, or more slaves were imported. For example, in 1607, at the end of one of Portobelo's major construction projects, the slave population was as high as 3,696.

Roads and Rivers

The actual transportation across Panama took place on a series of roads that were cleared for this purpose in the early sixteenth century. After the discovery of silver in Peru, these roads--really no more than miserable paths, sometimes paved, sometimes not--became one of the most⁵¹ important commercial routes in the Spanish New World.

The first calls for a road across the isthmus came in 1514, just one year after Balboa had gazed out on the Pacific for the first time. Little action was immediately taken, however, and not until Pedrarias took charge of royal authority in Panama did serious consideration of a transisthmian road begin. As Peter Martyr wrote, under Pedrarias "the colonists resolved to unite the two settlements (Nombre de Dios and Panama City) by a road. (This) was therefore laid out at the cost of the king and the colonists, nor was the expense small. Rocks had to be broken⁵² up, and wild beasts driven from their lairs." Figure 1-3 shows the colonial routes across Panama. The route described by Martyr later became known as the "Calle de la Carrera," or in later years as the "Las Cruces Trail" because of its immediate terminus. In 1528, settlers in Panama argued that a road to Venta de Cruces, and then transportation down the Chagres River to the Caribbean, was far cheaper than attempting to build a land road all the way from Panama to

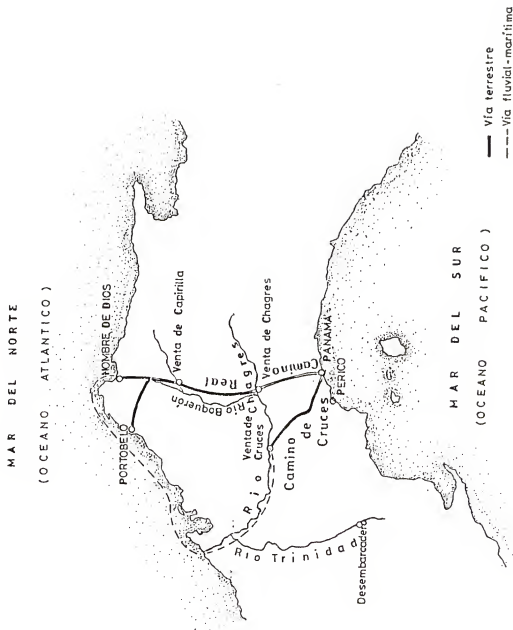


Figure 1-3 Roads of Panama

Nombre de Dios. Even so, the land road was cleared in the 1530s, giving merchants an alternative to the Cruces/Chagres route. This second road came to be called the "Calle de Santo Domingo," though today historians refer to it as the "Camino Real."

The trail to Cruces, much shorter than the Camino Real, was paved all the way, as indeed were large parts of the road to the Caribbean coast. The paved road was eight feet wide and was raised from one to three feet above the ground. The main track was made of rounded field stones measuring four to eight inches in diameter, while the edges were finished with larger rocks. Cement was not used to keep the stones in place, making constant repairs a necessity.⁵⁴ No bridges existed to cross frequent streams and rivers except in the terminal cities (where they still stand today). Accordingly, frequent delays caused by swollen rivers were a hallmark of the trajín.

Both roads were maintained by the government, which taxed travelers to pay for the slaves and materials that were needed. The tax was formalized in 1593 when an "avería del camino" of .5 percent was collected on all silver transported across the isthmus. Later this tax was extended to bulk merchandise.⁵⁵ In addition to maintaining the roads, funds raised by the avería del camino were spent on the upkeep of ventas, or inns for travelers. Such overnight resting stops were built in Capira, La Junta and Chagres on the overland

route, and in Cruces and Chagres on the river route. These stations were actually owned by the city of Panama, but Nombre de Dios was responsible for maintaining a small inn on the Río Pequeño.⁵⁶

The River Route. The river route across the isthmus consisted of three parts. First was a five league journey overland from Panama City to Venta de Cruces, which was followed by an 18 league river journey to the mouth of the Chagres River at San Lorenzo. After this, a one day trip on the Caribbean was necessary to bring travelers and merchandise to Portobelo (two days to Nombre de Dios). The Chagres River route was first explored in 1527 when the city of Panama commissioned Captain Hernando de La Serna to examine the river's navigation potential. His report was positive and by the mid 1530s, after the conquest of Peru was under way, the river was in regular use.⁵⁷

The total time needed for travel from Panama to Portobelo was something between one and two weeks, depending upon the level of the river and strength of the current. The trip up river, of course, took considerably longer. On the land portion of the trip mules and slaves were employed (see below), the journey taking place largely at night to avoid the sun and heat that characterized the plains before Panama City. The Las Cruces Trail lay through these plains for the most part, but as the road neared Venta de Cruces some

58
 foothills (as high as 600 feet) made the trail rougher. At the road's end stood the tiny village that gave the road its name. Flooded by the waters of the Panama Canal today, in the sixteenth and seventeenth century the town was one of moderate size, consisting of some 50 houses, a church, and numerous storage barns and docking facilities. In the sixteenth century Cruces was controlled by municipal authorities in Panama City, but as time wore on the office of alcalde became hereditary (becoming an alcalde mayorship in the eighteenth century). This alcalde controlled the 47 ⁵⁹ cámaras which were rented to merchants for the storing of merchandise bound for the north coast at a rate of one half peso per day. Income from these rentals amounted to more than 10,000 pesos per year. Given the quantity of registered merchandise, this figure should not have exceeded 3,000 pesos and thus indicates a high level of fraud even in the sixteenth century. In the eighteenth century, the village of Gorgona emerged as a rival of Venta de Cruces. Gorgona, located in the same vicinity as its rival, had the advantage of both a better landing and a smoother route to Panama City. A cleared road was in fact opened up in 1735. Even so this route remained little used and Gorgona was never more than a "miserable little hamlet" until the California gold rush era ⁶⁰ of the mid nineteenth century.

Once cargoes reached Venta de Cruces they were loaded onto various types of river craft for transportation to the

Caribbean. The smaller boats, called bongos, could carry up to 25 tons of merchandise, while barges, or chatas, were able to transport a little more. Each had a pilot and a crew of 20 or so slave boatmen that provided propulsion by means of long poles. From 1548 to 1570 some 25 such vessels per year left Venta de Cruces (employing just under 500 slaves). In 1592 30 embarcations were recorded, from 1599 to 1620 some 25 per year, and in 1672--the last year for which information is available--⁶¹30. Navigation on the river was no small feat. Though the Chagres could rise to become a major river in the rainy season (especially in November and December when it could rise as much as 40 inches in one day), normally it presented a shallow channel that was marred by some 23 rapids⁶² and shoals.

For the most part, the river route across Panama was preferred to the land route when large and bulky shipments were made. Freight costs per pound of merchandise, for example, were much less than on the Camino Real. But the river route had one great disadvantage: until the construction of Castillo San Lorenzo in the seventeenth century, the river was indefensible against foreign corsairs that preyed on the bongos and chatas. Moreover, as mentioned above, the route via the Chagres required a short journey through the unprotected and dangerous waters between the mouth of the river and Portobelo. As will be detailed in

chapter 3, these drawbacks were far from theoretical: more than a little merchandise was lost through pirate incursions. This danger, more than anything else, provided the raison d'etre for the Camino Real to Portobelo.

The land route. The Camino Real, better protected simply because it was largely inaccessible to ship-borne interlopers, served as the principal conduit for bullion shipments across Panama. Also, other valuable and less bulky items (such as pearls, etc.) were always shipped on the overland route. The distance from Panama City to Portobelo (and, before 1597, Nombre de Dios) was about 18 leagues. Immediately after leaving Panama City the road ascended the valley of the Algorroba and threaded its way toward the Chagres, which it reached at Pequeni. Here the trail reached an elevation of some 600 feet. After crossing the Chagres, the road continued up the Pequeni valley, soon reaching Boquerón where the difficult going began. The hardest part of the trail in this area was the crossing of a big hill, known to travelers, as "Cuperilla." Here the road was only two to three feet wide, with drops of 400 to 500 feet on either side. Over the centuries, many men and mules were killed passing here. As bad as the Cuperilla was, the road was still fully paved. After this treacherous section the road became somewhat better, but the Capira or Santa Clara mountains quickly rose, separating central Panama from the coast. Here the trail

became a steep muddy path. One traveler wrote, it was "so narrow and steep, in many places almost perpendicular, that we were obliged to ascend climbing with our hands and feet. . . . We sank up to our knees in mud . . . and at other times the whole party seemed to be lost in the windings of the road, cut deep into the side of the mountains."⁶³ After this section, the road descended into the valley of the Río Cascajal, which it followed into Portobelo. Before Portobelo was founded, the road wound its way along the Río de Nombre de Dios (crossing the divide at 750 feet), joining the Boquerón trail described above.⁶⁴

Descriptions of the trail--usually emphasizing its poor condition and state of repair--abound, not the least of which is the 1569 report made by Toledo as he was crossing to take up his charge as Viceroy of Peru. His comments centered on the point that the few black slaves kept in Panama City and Nombre de Dios were most insufficient for the maintenance of the roads. Indeed, he found the road to be so bad that he instructed officials in Panama to make a survey for a new one. Moreover, he appropriated 10,000 pesos to maintain a force of 200 soldiers to patrol the road and protect travelers against robbers.⁶⁵ In 1640 a priest living in Panama City referred to the road as a "malíssimo camino peor que jamás yo he visto en todo lo que he andado."⁶⁶

After the grand days of the Portobelo route had passed, the road fell into disrepair, and by 1740 it was almost

impassable, though occasional use kept it open. By 1826, however, its need had passed and thus was permanently abandoned.⁶⁷ The Chagres River route, however, remained in service until the construction of the railroad in the 1850s.

Mules and Mule Trains

⁶⁸
The beast of burden of the isthmian trajín was the mule, of which thousands crossed between Panama City and Portobelo every year that saw the arrival of a fleet in Tierra Firme. The mule transportation network in Panama required an extensive support system that provided hardware, food, and even the mules themselves.

Panama was not the only great mule route in the Spanish Americas. Others, such as the Potosí to Lima route (50,000 mules covering 408 leagues distance), the Mendoza to Santiago run, the Acapulco to Veracruz run, and the Huancavelica to Potosí run each, together with the road from Panama to Portobelo, provided the basic means of connecting inland areas with sea coasts and bridging interrupted sea lanes. Still another important route connected the Caribbean coast of New Granada to cities as far inland as Quito.⁶⁹

Unlike the prevailing situation on the other mule routes in the Americas, the Panama trajín required the importation of mules from distant provinces--most often from San Miguel in El Salvador and Granada in Nicaragua, though sometimes from La Choluteca in Honduras.⁷⁰ The need to import the

animals was apparent early on as all attempts to breed mules on the isthmus failed. Accordingly, and since mules by definition did not reproduce, as many as 1,000 mules per year⁷¹ made the long march from Central America to Panama.

In addition to importing mules, it was also necessary to import food for the animals. Although mules could live off pasture grasses during the off season, when they were required to expend significant amounts of energy in transporting goods across the mountains, they needed a food source that provided more protein. Corn was the most common grain given to the mules, and it had to be imported from distant provinces near the Costa Rican border.⁷² Corn cultivation was so successful in some districts that yearly surpluses were exported to Peru, but several factors contrived to reduce the viability of the industry in⁷³ the seventeenth century. Principal among these was the spectre of foreign attack in the corn districts, incursions which led to the abandonment of some of the better growing areas. A second, more subtle development that acted to reduce corn production was the increasing irregularity of the carrera schedule in the mid seventeenth century. Farmers, for instance, would grow as much as 10,000 bushels of corn to supply the mules for a fair, only then to learn that the fleet's arrival had been postponed for one to two years. On other occasions, farmers would be told that no

fair was at hand and accordingly they would plant fewer hectares, when suddenly a fleet might arrive. This irregularity steadily drove more and more of Veragua's farmers into the cattle industry.⁷⁴

Even before corn production began to fall, the supplying of food for mules on the Caribbean side of the isthmus was provided from Cartagena. It was cheaper to carry corn on ship from that port than to transport it across the isthmus on the backs of the very mules it was destined to feed. Either way, corn on the north coast was expensive, costing eight to ten reales per arroba.⁷⁵

A normal sized fair required the use of as many as a thousand mules, each of which would make as many as three trips across the isthmus per fair season. Table 1-5 presents the number of mules in Panama for years from which data are available. For the most part during the era of the carrera something over 1,000 mules could regularly be found on the isthmus, and if one recalls that annual mule drives from Central America brought in nearly this number it is possible to get a clear understanding of how unhealthy the Panamanian climate was for these animals. Table 1-6 indicates prices mules commanded for most of the colonial era. Though some wild fluctuations exist (perhaps owing to supply problems in Central America), for the most part mules could be purchased for 30 to 40 pesos each. Thus, the purchase cost of mules for the trajín often exceeded the yearly defense costs of the

Table 1-5
Mule Population of Panama, 1570-1781

Year	Number of Mules	Year	Number of Mules
1570	500-600	1737	579
1592	1,200	1738	818
1607	805	1739	140
1624	1,600	1740	50
1645	1,000	1741	60
1670	8,000(a)	1743	60
1678	1,200	1744	305
1681	1,387	1745	421
1706	125	1746	168
1710	220	1747	43
1714	107	1748	65
1716	80	1749	268
1717	167	1750	130
1718	213	1751	200
1719	175	1752	225
1722	708	1753	25
1725	261	1754	100
1726	1,331	1766	18
1727	682	1777	80
1730	611	1779	21
1731	579	1781	42

a. Figure comes from AGI Panamá 80, but Castellero Calvo indicates it represents an obvious exaggeration.

Source: AGI Panamá 14, 74, 80, 188, and 155; Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica, sección Histórica, Archivo Colonial/Cartago, various boxes, all as presented in Alfredo Castellero Calvo, Economía terciaria y sociedad Panamá siglos XVI y XVII (Panama, 1980) pp. 62-65.

Table 1-6
Mule Prices in Panama, 1544-1777
(in pesos ensayados)

Date	Price/Mule
1544/47	70-90
1575	25-75
1595	110-160
1596	30-40
1617-1662	32-35
1620	100
1645-1663	55-60
1678	32
1681	34-35
1772	20
1777	25

Source: Figures for 1595 come from AGI Contaduría 1506, fols. 168-169; all others from Alfredo Castellero Calvo, Economía terciaria y sociedad Panamá siglos XVI y XVII (Panama, 1980), p. 71. The variation in the 1595 data is as follows: 23 March, 110 pesos; 4 April, 160 pesos; 16 April, 120 pesos; and 18 April, 150 pesos. Thanks are due to Gabriella Irazabal for assistance in research relating to mule and slave data.

realm. In years when the mule supply was short, as in 1596, more cargo had to be transported on the Chagres barges⁷⁷ than was otherwise the case.

The mule trains that snaked across the isthmus varied in size, some counting as many as 500 mules each. More often, smaller trains prevailed. In 1592, for example, 1,200 mules in Panama were divided into 24 trains of 50 mules, each group being handled by 24 specially trained black slaves known as esclavos arrieros.⁷⁸ Each mule could carry some 200 pounds of merchandise, individual mules being limited to 6 varras de plata or 2 cajones de reales (for a total of 26,000 reales). Other sources indicate that the average load consisted of about 2,000 pesos in silver.⁷⁹ If such limits were implemented in order to provide a check against smuggling, there can be little doubt that they were exceeded, thus contributing to the high rate of mule demise.

Prices on the isthmus varied over time, being more expensive on the longer Camino Real than on the Venta de Cruces road. Select prices are presented in table 1-7. Prices seem to follow an inflationary incline (with the exception of a large rise to 50 pesos and a subsequent return to about 30 pesos on the Portobelo route in the 1660s). Some specific cases serve to illustrate the cost of transportation between the seas. In 1553, 32 loads of cloth on the Cruces to Panama road cost 112 pesos, while in the same year 10 loads of cloth on the Nombre de Dios to Panama road cost 80

Table 1-7

Mule Transportation Costs, 1547-1800

I. Panama to Venta de Cruces

Year	Cost
1547	3.5 pesos
1612	7.5 to 9 pesos
1612-1644	8 to 10 pesos
1645	12 to 14 pesos
1662	14 pesos

II. Panama to the Atlantic

Year	Cost
1547	6 to 8 pesos
1571	24 pesos
Most of 17th century	25 to 30 pesos
1662	50 pesos
1678-1680	29 pesos
Most of 18th century	30 to 40 pesos

Source: Alfredo Castellero Calvo, Economía Terciaria (Panama, 1980), pp. 26-29; AGI Panamá 23, 74, 80, 105, and 326.

pesos. Later, in 1586, five clerics hired mules to transport them from Nombre de Dios to Panama at a cost of 140 pesos.⁸⁰

The owners of mules in Panama became quite wealthy and acquired much property.⁸¹

These prices were very high in comparison to rates on the other principal mule routes of the empire. Castellero Calvo has calculated that per kilometer mule transportation in Panama cost 3 times that on the Huancavelica to Potosí run, 11 to 12 times that of the Mendoza to Santiago run, 17 times that on the Punta Arenas to Cartago run, and all of 44 times more than was charged on the Acapulco to Veracruz run.⁸²

The principal reason for the high rates, of course, was the unusual expense of constantly importing more mules from Central America, but another factor was also significant: in Panama a small number of arrieros had a tight monopoly on all mule transportation. Since the mule industry was one of the principal livelihoods of the isthmus, officials in Panama were generally supportive of exorbitant rates, despite complaints from the captive merchants of both Spain and Peru.

The Portobelo Fairs

Although Panama City was the political and social metropolis of Tierra Firme, Portobelo served as the region's economic center. It was here (and at Nombre de Dios before 1597) that merchants from Europe and South America met for a few weeks to conduct a year's worth of trading; it was here where bags

of silver containing millions of pesos lay in heaps on the plaza and where tent cities filled with rich cloth, jewels, and other European products abounded. Indeed, Portobelo was the grandest fair of the all.

Origins and Organization. The origins of the fair structure that characterized the Portobelo celebrations had their roots in the medieval trade fairs of Europe.⁸³ Venice, Champagne, and Burgos were Portobelo's precursors, but once the New World began to play a major role in the Atlantic economy, Europe's fairs became dependent, to some extent, on the success or failure of trading in Panama and the timely arrival of the Indies fleets. Indeed, in the 1590s the frequent delays that were common in the carrera during that time brought the historic fairs of Medina del Campo to an end.⁸⁴ This stemmed from one of the major functions of the fairs--both in the New World and the Old: in addition to merchandising locations, they functioned as international bullion exchange centers. As Vivens Vives wrote, "If exchange became the most widespread instrument of monetary circulation, the Castilian fairs of medieval origin became in the sixteenth century the typical terrain for negotiating bills of exchange. That is the fairs, which before had been centers for mercantile relations, grew more and more into institutions of a marked financial character."⁸⁵ This was exemplified better nowhere than at Portobelo.

Silver from the New World roughly tripled the amount of bullion in European circulation by the end of the seventeenth century. The impact of this influx was far-felt, not only for the Spanish Atlantic economy, but for world bullion exchanges as well. In Spain, merchants involved in the Indies trade depended on the timely arrival of silver to finance continued trading. Farther afield, economic activity in the Mediterranean, Austria, and even Turkey was directly impacted by the availability of Spanish silver. Insofar as the northern European economies are concerned, in addition to providing a foundation for national economies (especially in Holland), the Indies trade and American silver provided the bullion needed to balance the exchanges between Europe and Asia, via the Baltic and Constantinople. As far away as China, the Spanish kings were known as the "silver kings," the bullion of the Americas creating "a sort of economic unity in the world."

86

The organization of the fairs at Portobelo was left, for the most part, unspecified--even officials on the isthmus were uncertain of their legal standing and the extent of their authority. Various regulations, often contradictory, were issued every few years, but these served to further cloud the issues rather than to clarify them. Competition for authority involved three major players: (1) Panamanian authorities represented by the president of the audiencia; (2) Lima consulado interests, represented by the viceroy of

Peru when he was present, by merchants when he was not; and (3) flota officials, usually military men, who, for the most part, claimed to represent the crown's interests at the fairs, and thus, by inference, were concerned for the well being of the Spanish merchants attending the fairs. By refusing to recognize any one of these interests as superior to the others, the crown was able to stop any single faction from gaining too much power, but this policy eventually undercut the authority of New World viceroys more than the others.

The Captain General of the flota was usually able to maintain immediate authority in Portobelo itself, if only because he was able to command the garrisons that traveled on the galleons. In fact, legally the Captain General was superior to the president of Panama--especially after the 1570s when the crown finally ruled that the president of Panama was not equal in authority to the viceroys of Peru and New Spain.⁸⁷ Fleet officials wielded their power by heavily influencing the pricing of goods, and, more importantly, by controlling the duration of trading. After all, they could order the fleet to set sail at any time.

The role of fixing prices was ostensibly placed in the hands of both the commander of the fleet and the president of Panama. These two officials were supposed to meet before the fair began to set prices on specific classes of merchandise.

This had the effect of preventing runaway prices from rendering merchandise unmarketable in Peru.⁸⁸ For most of the colonial era, the president of Panama was seen as the representative of Peruvian interests, and for so long as Panamanian and Peruvian forces were able to maintain an economic alliance, they were usually able to control pricing practices.⁸⁹ Once the interests of Panama came to be regarded as different from those of Peru--as became the case as the carrera entered the difficult years of the mid-seventeenth century--Panamanian officials tended to act against Spaniard and Peruvian alike. To this end, Panamanians had a number of weapons that they used with great skill, not the least of which was the authority to issue permits to cross the isthmus to Portobelo. On more than one occasion, a Peruvian merchant would arrive in Panama loaded down with silver for trading at the fair, only to be denied permission to attend.⁹⁰ Sometimes tempers flaired as friction between Panamanian and Peruvian officials grew. For example, in both 1722 and 1739, Peruvian merchants were literally held captive and were unable to embark their newly purchased cargoes until they paid large donations to Panamanian officials. The 1722 controversy became inflamed when Peruvian merchants initially refused to make an 8,000 peso contribution to offset the president's expenses incurred on his journey from Panama City to the fair.⁹¹ And this was not an isolated incident.

A large factor in the success of individual fairs was the maintaining of a proper ratio of Peruvian silver to European goods. As Haring pointed out, "As the colonies were chronically undersupplied, the general level of prices at these fairs was governed by the comparatively simple procedure of balancing the whole value of the goods brought out with the whole amount of raw materials and bullion offered by the creole merchants for exchange."⁹² Haring wrote those lines over 50 years ago, but more recent scholarship indicates that although his main point is accurate, the relationship between bullion and goods was somewhat more complex, especially as the "chronic undersupply"⁹³ gave way to market saturation in the seventeenth century. Even then, however, as Dilg writes:

It was absolutely vital that Lima merchants bring almost precisely the amount of silver required to purchase galleon goods. If they took too much, the value of silver would depreciate momentarily relative to the galleon wares and they would have to pay higher prices. . . . On the other hand, if they took too little, they might benefit by a reduction of Spanish prices. But then they risked the possibility that the Spanish would have so many goods left over that they would descend en masse on Lima.⁹⁴

Merchants who found themselves short of cash were hard put to borrow funds in Panama, where interest rates could soar as high as 40 percent (as in the case of 1731). That year Lima merchants were forced to borrow 8,000,000 of the

13,000,000 pesos they traded because of an acute silver
⁹⁵ shortage in Peru. Merchants that found themselves cash
 poor, however, might wait until near the end of the fair when
 Spanish merchants began to dump merchandise at reduced rates
⁹⁶ so as to minimize their losses. On the other hand,
 sometimes merchandise that could not be sold at Portobelo was
 carried back and sold in Cartagena, and on occasion Spanish
 merchants themselves went to Peru to unload their cargos by
⁹⁷ undercutting the prices charged by the Peruvian merchants.
 Another means by which Spanish merchants minimized their
 losses was to wait in Panama an entire year with the object
 of selling leftover goods at the next fair.

Merchants traveling to the Portobelo fairs faced great
 expenses upon their arrival. The rental value of a shop on
 the square at Portobelo, for instance, could be as high as
⁹⁸ 1,000 pesos per month. Prices for food and other supplies
 also rose during the fair season, as Thomas Gage pointed out
 (1637):

A fowl (was) worth 12 reales, which in the
 main land within I had often bought for one; a
 pound of beef there was worth 2 reales whereas
 I had had in other places 13 pound for half a
 real. . . . All was so excessively dear that I
 knew not how to live but by fish and tortoises
 . . . which was the cheapest meat that I
 could eat.⁹⁹

Merchandise. A large array of merchandise was traded through
 Portobelo. After all, almost all European finished goods
 that reached the Pacific coast of South America traveled

through Panama, and on the other end, the flow of silver from the Americas to Europe resulted in tripling the amount of silver in circulation in the world economy--60 percent of which new silver came by way of Portobelo.

For purposes of taxation and registration, items were divided into several general classes, each of which was taxed at a bulk rate. For much of the seventeenth century, each arroba (28 pounds) of merchandise bound for Portobelo was officially registered as having a value of 5,100¹⁰⁰ maravedis. Of course, such an inexact system of registration based more or less on cubic measurement rather than real value opened wide the door to deliberate alterations of manifests and declarations. In 1698, therefore, the crown moved to change the system so that taxes were assessed on the number of individual items rather than on weight or measurement. Reform, however, came too late to save the declining carrera, and rather than deal with the added burden of keeping accurate records, officials restored¹⁰¹ the old system in 1707. Whatever the system, taxation was based on New World values rather than the wholesale rate paid in Sevilla, thus providing the crown with a tax base that reflected not only inflation stemming from profit taking by Spanish merchants, but also one that incorporated the cost of¹⁰² the transatlantic voyage.

Because of the general nature of record keeping where cargoes are concerned, data regarding actual items traded are

scarce. The carrera trade was so regular over time, however, that the details available for select years can justifiably be used to represent trade at other periods. Tables 1-8, 1-9, and 1-10 detail cargo data from 1650-1699, 1701-1704, and 1721-1739, respectively. Additionally, table 1-11 presents the list of European items traded in the carrera as outlined in the preface to the 1702 English edition of Veitia Linaje's The Spanish Rule of Trade.

Imports into Portobelo from Spain included mainly finished products, especially fine cloths, worked metals (iron), china, glassware, books, paper, ink, aguardiente and wine.¹⁰³ The Veitia Linaje list is more exact, reporting not only the item imported, but also the European provenience of the goods listed. It should be noted, however, that this list includes items shipped to New Spain, as well as those sent to Panama. Standing large in table 1-12 are spices, especially from Holland (which no doubt originated in the growing Dutch Asian empire). From Flanders, England, and France came textiles, while Hamburg provided these items plus metal and wood goods. Cloth, iron, and soap made up the Italian merchandise. Spanish goods, it should be noted, made up only a small portion of shipments, this the price of letting the carrera largely fall into the hand of foreign merchants and neglect of peninsular manufacturing sectors.

In the other direction, the cargoes were far less varied, though just as valuable. Far and away the most

Table 1-8
Merchandise at the Portobelo Fairs, 1650-1699

I. Imports

Item	Measure	1650s	1660s	1670s	1680s	1690s	Total
Wine	Arrobas	38,424	62,753	35,856	10,149	45,205	192,387
Aguardiente	Arrobas	1,318	596	882	5,835	18,741	27,372
Oil	Arrobas	1,720	5,779	4,570	1,395	20,135	33,799
Wax	Marquetas	717	1,231	9,326	11,561	20,380	43,215
Books	Cases	450	1,683	698	427	769	4,027
Medicine	Cases	108	113	145	96	116	578
Lead	Cases	-	77	273	99	56	509
Iron Fittings	Cases	1,416	5,118	4,989	4,732	11,185	27,440
Iron Handles	Quintales	100	300	650	410	20	1,480
Nails	Cases	389	2,540	1,379	115	2,775	7,198
Iron Hoes	Cases	2,226	3,661	4,790	1,400	2,111	14,188
Ploughs	Single Items	2,510	7,053	9,701	7,104	12,050	38,418
Paper	Bales	53	355	2,192	2,731	4,887	10,218
Textiles	Fardos	1,936	8,959	12,968	8,913	13,382	46,158

Table 1-8 continued

II.Exports

Item	Measure	1650s	1660s	1670s	1680s	1690s	Total
Campeche Wood	Quintales	117	-	-	300	382	799
Indigo	Arrobas	528	2,000	10,920	-	-	13,448
Brazilwood	Quintales	1,350	-	740	-	500	2,590
Hides	Single Items	24,260	2,000	1,685	100	10,110	38,155
Sugar	Arrobas	6,061	-	8,773	922	-	15,756
Cacao	Arrobas	717	-	127	1,447	809	3,101
Tobacco	Arrobas	826	60	148	-	180	1,214
Total Value of American Goods (Including Silver)		6,750,004	3,168,803	2,546,590	873,663	839,837	14,178,897

Note: Table excludes exports of precious metals.

Source: Lutgado García Fuentes, El comercio Español con América, 1650-1700, (Sevilla, 1980) pp. 258-383.

Table 1-9

Partial list of merchandise traded through Panama, 1701-1704

I. Exports through Panama from Guayaquil to Spain.

Item	Quantity	1701	1702	1703	1704	Total
Common Cloth	Fardos	35	51	30	18	134
Cloth of Quito	Fardos	-	2	-	-	2
Cordoban Cloth	Fardos	20	-	-	5	25
Canvas	Fardos	-	-	4	-	4
Ropes and Cords	Fardos	-	-	24	-	24
Spools of Thread	Fardos	5	-	-	8	13
Traya	Fardos	-	1	2	1	4
Scarves	Fardos	1	-	4	-	5
Preserved Food	Fardos	-	17	-	-	17
Cigarettes	Fardos	25	-	6	-	31
Aguardiente	Bottles	7,812	3,119	6,898	10,869	28,698
Wine	Bottles	1,584	2,108	1,988	2,958	8,639
Oil	Bottles	506	20	1,639	400	2,565
Lard	Bottles	-	-	12	-	12
vinegar	Bottles	311	-	150	1,512	1,973
Olive Oil	Bottles	253	45	240	120	658
Flour	Sacks	500	1,154	5,597	798	8,049
Flour	Bags	1,583	-	290	822	2,695
Garbanzo Beans	Sacks	-	26	-	-	26
Lentils	Bags	33	-	-	20	53
Beans	Fanegas	-	56	-	-	56
Garbanzo Beans	Fanegas	-	20	-	-	20
Wheat	Fanegas	-	-	-	200	200
Wheat	Sacks	-	341	-	-	341
Seeds	Sacks	-	-	7	-	7
Cumin	Bags	10	2	-	20	32
Oregano	Bags	1	8	-	2	11
Celantro	Bags	-	8	-	-	8
Anis	Bags	2	3	-	-	5
Other Herbs	Bags	71	51	36	11	169
Garlic	Sacks	21	-	-	-	21
Raisins	Pouches	58	38	118	8	222
Figs	Pouches	28	30	-	-	58
Peanuts	Baskets	-	-	21	-	21
Almonds	Bags	2	-	1	2	5
Coconuts	Bags	25	1	8	-	34
Cacao	Fardos	-	-	308	-	308
Tallow	Bags	1,212	987	200	138	2,537
Tallow	Quintales	400	536	-	100	1,036
Soap	Pouches	-	43	22	-	65
Ink	Bags	15	-	1	7	23

Table 1-9 continued

II. Imports through Panama from Spain to Guayaquil.

Item	Quantity	1701	1702	1703	1704	Total
Ink	Boxes	-	-	-	40	40
Clay dishes	Boxes	1	2	-	-	3
Salt	Blocks	-	-	200	-	200
Crude Wool	Sacks	20	32	40	23	115
Fine Wool	Sacks	50	274	10	-	334
China	Crates	23	5	12	6	46
China	Baskets	-	15	-	15	30
China	Crates of 12	40	236	151	-	427
China	Misc. Pieces	88	-	-	-	88
Glassware	Crates	9	8	17	15	49
Hats	Crates	9	8	6	4	26
Crude Copper	Quintales	52	-	-	-	52
Fine Copper	Quintales	37	-	-	100	137
Worked Copper	Pounds	325	4,033	400	-	4,758
Crude Copper	Pounds	300	475	-	-	775
Tin	Varas	38	21	-	2	61
Copper	Sheets	-	10	-	81	91
Lead	Sheets	-	14	25	4	43
Gunpowder	Kegs	5	31	150	8	194
Munitions	Pouches	6	3	6	-	15
Sulphur	Pouches	7	-	-	-	7
Bronze	Balls	-	-	200	-	200

Source: Moreyra y Paz Soldán, Estudios sobre el tráfico marítimo en la época colonial, (Lima, 1944) pp. 30-32.

Table 1-10

Merchandise at the Portobelo Fairs, 1721-1739

Item	Measure	1721	1726	1730	1739	Total
Textiles	Palmos	144,126	373,357	504,955	348,892	1,371,330
Wine and Vinegar	Arrobas	33,399	8,658	43,866	10,552	96,475
Oil	Arrobas	4,339	-	3,070	1,756	9,165
Aguardiente	Arrobas	4,808	2,074	8,856	67	15,805
Iron	Quintales	15,879	21,468	29,796	22,415	89,558
Steel	Quintales	1,773	4,378	2,378	439	8,968
Tin	Barrels	39	43	211	-	293
Wax	Arrobas	8,668	23,188	63,241	19,235	114,332
Paper	Reams	43,017	71,797	103,324	52,291	270,429
Almonds	Arrobas	956	-	-	-	956
Raisins	Arrobas	274	6	41	-	321
Olive Oil	Cuñetes	482	289	152	-	923
Capers	Cuñetes	100	-	-	-	100
Cinnamon	Pounds	23,337	17,083	50,950	16,927	108,297
Pimentos	Arrobas	532	1,120	32	1,285	2,969
Lavender	Quintales	128	68	29	-	225
Lead	Quintales	88	7	-	-	95
Verdigris	Pounds	1,725	-	475	1,375	3,575
Writing Feathers	-	213,000	139,000	117,000	106,000	629,000
Raw Cloth	Half Pieces	3,936	17,728	30,031	22,104	73,799
Stripped Canvas	Pieces	100	830	905	2,362	4,197
Thread	Quintales	-	97	487	34	618
Ribbon	Dozens	3,578	2,788	832	800	7,998
Books and Drugs	Crates	330	500	1,029	442	2,301
Soap	Arrobas	-	281	27	-	308
Value in Pesos Ensayados		151,744	390,119	682,353	353,089	1,577,305

Source: Antonio García-Baquero González, *Cádiz y el Atlántico (1717-1778)*, (Sevilla, 1976) ii pp. 180-183.

Table 1-11
 Veitia Linage's List of Merchandise
 of the Indies Trade, 1702

I. From Flanders

Picotes (of wool)	White twine
Picotes (of silk)	Fine twine
Worked palometas	Hounscots (3,4, and 5 seals)
Partly worked palometas	Stripped linen from Ghent
Worked damasks	Ghent fine linen
Partly worked damasks	Fine linen from Courtray
White napkins	Damasks of silk and thread
Black napkins	Ordinary white thread
Mixed Quinietas	Fine thread
Hollands	Coarse thread
Baracanes	Colored thread
Woman's hose of Tournay	Laces of twisted cotton
Men's and children's hose	Cotton Ribbon
Hair Chamlots from Brussels	White filliting
Lamp shades	Red tape
White thread lace	Whip-cord, large
Black silk lace	Whip-cord, small
Brown coarse linen	Hair buttons
White coarse linen	Other sorts of Haberdashery

II. From Holland

Pepper	Threads of all sorts
Cloves	Sail cloth
Cinnamon	Cables and rigging
Nutmegs	Ropes and packthread
Serges dyed red	Pitch and tar
Black Leyden says	Benjamin
Black Delft says	Motillas of silk
Fustians	Motillas of wool
Broad Hollands	Borlones
Narrow Hollands	Printed Borlones
Stripped linen	Velvets and Plushes

Table 1-11 continued

III. From England

Mixed serges	White Hounscot says
Perpetuanas, long	Fustians
Long yards perpetuanas	Scottish linen
Printed chenyes	Benjamin
Silk hose	Lead
Colchester bays dyed and white	Various cloths
Worked fine hose	Scarlet serges
Woollen hose	Calicoes, dyed
Wrought pewter and block tin	Pepper
Black Hounscot says	Musk
Amber	Civet

IV. From France

Velvets	Brocades
Satins	Rhone linen
Rhone Blancartes	Rhone floretts
Rhone trunks	Cambricks
Broad and narrow kenting	Morlaix dowlas
Broad creas	Narrow creas
Creas of Gascony	Broad coletas
Narrow coletas	Fine contences
Ordinary contences	Sail cloth
Combs and Haberdashery	Gold and silver lace
Silk lace	Fine thread lace

V. From Hamburg

Pipe staves, large	Pipe staves, small
Ordinary lumber from Norway	Lumber from Sweden
Large planks	Blue paper slesies
Boccadillos	Burlap
Capadereys	White cresuelas
Brown cresuelas	Checkered linen
Vestualias	Fine bed ticking
Ordinary bed ticking	Napkins and tablecloths
Esterlines	Double fustians
Single fustians	Russian hides
Tin plates	Latten wire
Starch	Blue powder
Gilt leather and gold leaf	Pins
Brass wire	Brass weights and scales
Brass kettles and pans	Yellow wax
Barbary wax	Cases of bottles

Table 1-11 continued

VI. From Italy

Ribbons of all sorts	Hair chamlots
Flowered silks with gold and silver	Silk from Naples
Shags	Velvets
Messina programs	Stockings from Naples
Paper from Genoa	Hose of coarse silk
Mohair stuffs from Smyrna	Thread from Genoa
Thread from Salo	Iron wares from Genoa
Rice from Milan	Hard soap
Almonds	Hoops
Sardinian wheat	Alum
Brimstone	Steel

VII. From Portugal

White and brown sugar	Tobacco and snuff
Musk in cods	Ambergris
Civet	Fine thread

VIII. From Old Spain

Taffetans of Granada	Black silk of Granada
Colored Silk of Granada	Silk hose from Toledo
Satins, flowered and plain	Mixed serges
Saffron	Wool
Wheat	Barley
Wines	Oil
Figs	Raisins
Salt	White wax
Iron ware from Biscay	

Source: Josephe de Veitia Linage, The Spanish Rule of Trade to the West Indies, (London, 1702), preface.

significant exports to Spain were silver and gold, the former predominating overwhelmingly. Silver import figures have been presented earlier in tables 1-2, 1-3, and 1-4. Silver made up some 80 percent of total value of shipments from the Americas, other cargoes accounting for the remaining 20 percent (though these other cargoes, being less valuable, pound per pound, took up 80 to 90 percent of cargo space). Next to silver, the most important exports were dye woods (Campeche wood, Brazil wood, and indigo), though in sheer bulk, cattle hides figured large. Sugar and tobacco, too, were important items in carrera commerce.

104

Merchants. The most important people on the isthmus were those who directly participated in trading--the merchants. Though the wealthiest Panamanians were part of the merchant class, most trading at the Portobelo fairs was done by merchants of Sevilla and Lima, or their agents. Initially, and for the most part throughout the sixteenth century, Spanish merchants (and thus, the Sevilla consulado) maintained a dominant position, but by the early seventeenth century, the wealth and power of the commercial class in Peru surpassed that of Sevilla. This reorientation in the imperial economy became abundantly apparent in 1609 when the Tierra Firme fleet carried hoards of peruleros, or Peruvian and Panamanian merchants that set up shop in Sevilla, replacing large numbers of Spanish merchants in that city.

By the 1620s, the eight to ten most wealthy peruleros were able to control the Sevillian end of the carrera.¹⁰⁵ The power of these merchants became such that in 1623 there were open calls for the crown to take action against them:

There ought to be a law against the so-called peruleros who come from Tierra Firme to do business in Spain and cause notorious damage to our own trade. . . . They are the drones in the hive of Spanish commerce with the Indies; they devour it and deprive Spaniards of profits. They are not the owners of the capital they employ, but merely factors. They assemble all the silver from Peru, silver which ought to be employed in the purchasing from the fleet at Portobelo; but they do not in fact employ it there, with the result that there are no buyers for Spanish merchandise and it has to be sold off at a loss. Instead, the peruleros bring their capital to Spain and buy up merchandise here, sending up prices and ruining the market.¹⁰⁶

As peruleros came to dominate the Sevilla end of the carrera, the power of the consulado of Lima became unrivaled in the Spanish commercial world: from 1620 onward, the Lima merchant houses were able to claim near total control over both wholesale and retail markets--a position the Sevilla consulado never held.¹⁰⁷ Peruvian consumers were now captive to whatever arbitrary practices and pricings Lima's self-serving merchants chose to enact. This monopoly remained intact until the only commercial alternative--smuggling--began to make large inroads into the South American market in the mid seventeenth century. By the eighteenth century the

Lima consulado had so lost its once exclusive control of the carrera that of 473 Peruvian merchants trading in Panama between 1720 and 1739, as many as 252 were not connected to the guild.¹⁰⁸

What of the merchants that lived on the isthmus itself? Panama City, and to a lesser extend the Atlantic port, boasted a large merchant population. Many of these, however, were representatives (often the distant arms of kinship networks) of Spanish and Peruvian commercial companies.¹⁰⁹ Even so, they did live in Panama and came, over time, to consider themselves Panamanians.

As discussed earlier, nearly the entire economic concern in Panama related to the trajín, and, according to contemporary reports, almost all the vecinos of Panama City were merchants or transportation agents.¹¹⁰ These merchants controlled the city governments of all Panama's cities, and had a large influence over the audiencia. Through these organs the merchant community was able to maintain itself in official favor--in matters both practical and theoretical.¹¹¹

The Panamanian merchant class was never very large in numbers--despite the isthmus' importance in the imperial commercial and defense system. The few hundred merchants that did call Panama their home, however, were a wealthy group. Tables 1-12 and 1-13 present data regarding the wealth controlled by members of this group in the 1570s. As can be seen, of the vecinos of Panama City, some 99 were able

Table 1-12

Wealth of Vecinos of
Panama City and Nombre de Dios, 1570-1575

I. Panama City

Number of Vecinos	Wealth (in ducats)
31	5,000-9,000
30	10,000-17,000
21	20,000-30,000
8	40,000-50,000
6	60,000-70,000
1	80,000
1	150,000
1	600,000

II. Nombre de Dios

Number of Vecinos	Wealth (in ducats)
8	5,000-9,000
2	10,000
1	15,000
1	30,000
2	40,000
1	50,000
1	60,000

Sources: María del Carmen Mena García, La sociedad de Panamá, p. 294; Alfredo Castellero Calvo, Economía terciaria, p. 42

Table 1-13
Major Merchant Companies in Panama, 1575

Company	Capital (ducats)
Corozo de la Sucha Company	600,000
Rodrigo de Salinas and Pedro de Morga	150,000
Ventura de Medina and Son	70,000
Pedro de Herrera Abrego	50,000
Francisco De Guinea	40,000
Gonzalo de Palma and Gonzalo de Jáen	40,000
Suárez and Son	30,000
Baltazar Sánchez de Melo	20,000

Source: Anonomous memoria dated circa 1575 as presented in María del Carmen Mena García, La sociedad de Panamá, pp. 280-289.

to claim capital in excess of 5,000 pesos, 38 of which owned more than 20,000. In Nombre de Dios there were only 15 vecinos that owned more than 5,000 pesos in capital, but four of these possessed 160,000 cumulatively.

The major Panamanian merchant companies were able to muster considerable capital to do business. The largest concern, Corozo de la Sucha and Company, had reserves of some 600,000 pesos—a large enough amount to rival the houses of Sevilla and Lima. Most of the companies, however, had considerably less than 100,000 pesos in reserves, and it should be noted that the table presents only the 8 largest firms. This situation had not changed by 1607 when of the 548 vecinos reported, only 178 had wealth in excess of 15,000 pesos, and only 4 had more than 40,000. An additional 62¹¹² vecinos, however, had between 5,000 and 14,000 pesos.

Thus, the Panamanian merchant class was little able to compete against the major companies of Spain and Peru: if powerful at home, it did not have the resources to significantly impact the carrera as a whole. Table 1-14 presents data regarding merchants that attended the early eighteenth-century Portobelo fairs. As can be observed, of all the merchants participating, Juan Antonio Tagle Bracho and Ysidro Gutiérrez Cosío were by far the wealthiest, followed by 6 others that, over the course of 4 fairs, brought in excess of 500,000 pesos to the isthmus.

Table 1-14

Merchants at the Portobelo Fairs, 1726-1739

Merchant	1726	Wealth Carried		1739	Total
		1730	1731-38		
Juan Antonio Tagle Bracho	-	728,320	95,844	877,600	1,701,764
Ysidro Gutiérrez Cosío	524,124	338,380	23,285	267,034	1,152,823
Tomás Muñoz	306,578	413,958	6,000	184,600	911,136
Martín de Zelayeta	180,820	394,850	16,000	250,800	842,470
Joseph Nieto de Lara	172,781	257,273	2,000	160,600	592,654
Martín de Zugasti	103,700	371,589	40,800	59,400	575,489
Simón Rui Díaz	82,040	129,170	203,732	147,100	562,042
Vicente Lee Flores	120,599	271,884	115,550	15,600	523,633
Manuel Iaviano	136,265	170,440	110,419	52,248	469,372
Joseph de Tagle	342,820	-	73,900	-	416,720
Juan Domingo Orrantia	83,000	121,227	63,066	101,831	369,124
Francisco Martín Layseca	59,640	121,860	14,500	160,200	356,190
Baltasar de Ayesta	230,872	45,680	9,360	15,400	301,312
Domingo Saldivar	94,109	48,890	12,930	84,714	240,643
Francisco de Burgos	92,216	63,218	243	8,970	164,647
Pablo de la Urrunaga	39,812	17,000	39,653	62,160	158,625
Baltasar Hurtado Jirón	46,516	25,000	10,271	75,600	157,387
Joseph Larrazábal	44,000	65,500	-	25,080	134,580
Miguel Rotalde	44,617	10,400	9,000	58,600	122,617
Total	2,704,509	3,599,639	846,553	2,555,289	9,705,990

Source: George Dilg, "The Collapse of the Portobelo Fairs: A Study in Spanish Commercial Reform, 1720-1740," Indiana University, Ph.D., 1975, Appendix C.

Smuggling

It now remains for us to address the last and most difficult topic under review in this first of two chapters on the isthmian economy--to wit contraband trade. The study of smuggling within the carrera is important for a number of reasons, not the least of which is because it, as much as if not more than legal commerce, was the means of exchange in Panama. The noted Jaime Vicens Vives openly states that official figures of silver imports, for example, may be as much as 50 percent under the mark.¹¹³ It will remain impossible to judge the total volume of Indies commerce until a reliable method (in the form of better documentation, more accurate means of tonnage calculation, etc.) is devised that will provide accurate estimates of quantities exchanged in illicit commerce. Though many historians have addressed the smuggling problem, to date none has put the question to rest. In Séville et l'Atlantique, the Chaunus approached the controversy of quantity from the angle of tonnage estimates, but because the most important item imported from the Americas--silver--was small in bulk and high in value, this approach is flawed, at least on eastbound routes. Another new approach, and one that currently seems promising, is that taken by M. Morineau in which Dutch newspaper reports rather than official Spanish documents are used to calculate bullion¹¹⁴ import figures. Morineau's figures are considerably

greater than those based on materials in the Archivo General de Indias, and this is an indication that higher levels of fraud beyond those previously envisioned characterized the carrera. The flaw in Morineau's approach, however, is that there is no means of determining if and when the newspaper reports exaggerated import amounts. The Sevillian records, on the other hand, surely are free of exaggeration (which would have worked against smugglers in their attempt to hide large portions of their imports). Thus, the Sevilla figures have the advantage of representing, at the very least, minimum figures. No doubt the truth lies somewhere between the traditional school and Morineau's new methodology.

The methods employed by smugglers were varied and flexible, changing as circumstances dictated. (It is important to note that in this discussion we are only concerned with smuggling within the carrera itself. Other means of illegal commerce--French ships trading directly with Peru, for example, or northern European slave ships carrying cargoes of finished goods--and their impact upon the carrera are examined in the following chapter.) The carriage of contraband cargo on the outbound trip from Spain was, no doubt, less voluminous than on the return trip. After all, it was far easier to hide 10,000 pesos in silver than an equivalent amount in tin pots and pans. Even so, contrabandists devised clever means of shipping even bulk

goods unregistered from Sevilla. One such method was the construction of ships with larger carrying capacities than indicated on registration papers. In this way registered cargoes could be supplemented by ten or fifteen percent with illicit goods. A far more common means of duping Spanish officials was to mislabel cargoes--claiming, for instance, that a box of fine china was a shipment of crude dishes. Since few inspections were made at Portobelo, and because goods imported for sale at the fairs were not individually noted on manifests (instead being lumped into several general classes), it was not difficult to carry thousands of pesos of misregistered goods. The sailors of the galleons themselves often sailed simply for the purpose of supplementing their incomes through the carriage of contraband items, a practice that was as common at the lowest ranks as at the highest.¹¹⁵

As will be explored in the next chapter, official connivance and participation in smuggling was no small factor in the eventual demise of the fair system.

It was the evasion of registration of silver that represented the most significant smuggling problem in the carrera, a process for which merchants developed complicated schemes and ruses. For example, as Lynch reports, "A favored device in Peru was to consign registered silver to non-existent persons in Panama, where the consignment nominally remained and was marked off the register; this silver would then be transferred across the isthmus . . . for the return

journey to Spain." ¹¹⁶ Spanish merchants also participated in these schemes, regularly giving 10 to 15 percent discounts to customers paying in unregistered silver. Not only was such silver more "valuable" because it could not be taxed by crown officials, but it was also safe from the practice of sequestration, that most common means of stop-gap financing ¹¹⁷ during the reigns of the later Hapsburgs.

Crown efforts to curtail smuggling were as varied as the smugglers' attempts to avoid detection, and the ever increasing penalties for smugglers caught in the act are indicative of an ever increasing smuggling problem. Efforts to protect the integrity of the carrera began at the first source of trouble in Peru. From the late sixteenth century onward, a basic means of cheating the government had been tampering with the silver brought out of the mines. Other metals were mixed with the raw bullion, yielding higher output of less pure coins and bars at the mint. This practice continued throughout the seventeenth century and became such a common phenomenon that all silver smelted in the southern viceroyalty was assumed tainted, and thus was discounted by as much as 25 percent in exchanges. At one point the crown executed and burned the director of the Lima mint, but the most successful means of combating this problem was through forcing smelters and the mint to produce only small bars and denominations, making it impossible for

contrabanders to imbed pieces of lead in the middle of silver bars to enhance bullion weight. Fines were imposed that punished fundidores who produced bars weighing over 120 marks.¹¹⁸

After every effort had been made to guarantee the purity of the silver supply, the next important measures against smuggling were tighter controls in the form of closer inspections of cargoes as they moved through the major ports. In the case of Nombre de Dios and Portobelo such inspections were difficult because few royal officials wanted to make the special effort to go from Panama City to the Atlantic port. One report sent to the crown in 1626 commented that merchants could unload contraband cargoes without fear of discovery because no officials were present to keep track of imports.¹¹⁹ Continued complaints, most much earlier than this 1626 report, led to the eventual construction of an aduana, or customs house in Portobelo, and the stationing of three treasury officials to supervise commercial activity at the fairs. Construction of the aduana was begun in 1630.¹²⁰

On the return voyage, ships were not permitted to physically come together for any reason for fear that silver might be transferred from one hold to another. Moreover, any direct contact with foreign vessels was absolutely prohibited. Once ships arrived in Spain they were to have been inspected within one day of arrival in order to prevent unregistered silver from being off-loaded.¹²¹ Although such

inspections were frequently carried out, little unregistered bullion was detected by inspectors who themselves were often accomplices to the crime.

Among other measures taken to stop rampant smuggling in the carrera were high rewards (one-third of uncovered silver) for individuals who denounced contrabandists, the death penalty for minting unregistered silver, and fines of up to four times value for possession of unquinted bullion.¹²² In 1618 Philip III went so far as to take the grand step of declaring that smugglers would no longer be issued pardons on a regular basis, and in 1634 his successor initiated new laws aimed at arresting the flow of illegal silver (including perpetual exiles for smugglers of high birth and long sentences to the galleys for lesser folk).¹²³

One of the most perplexing problems facing historians of the carrera is assessing the quantity of smuggled goods. By its very nature, smuggling leaves no paper trails for scholars to examine, and the few documents surrounding cases of smugglers caught in the act offer only limited insight into a minor part of the problem. As noted above, Morineau approaches the issue of contraband quantity from a new angle through his study of Dutch newspaper reports of silver arrivals in Sevilla which, he argues, are more accurate insofar as totals are concerned than official registry documents. Some of his findings are presented in table 1-15.

As can be seen, the disparity between the declared amount of silver imported from the New World and the amount reported by Dutch papers is substantial. Especially significant is the fact that if official figures are to be believed, the great collapse in the Indies trade came in the 1630s, followed by still another drop in the mid 1640s. On the other hand, if Morineau's estimates of smuggling are anywhere near the mark, the collapse--if there was one--came much later. Indeed, Morineau's figures for the 1640s and 1650s are not that much lower than those for the 1630s. The percentage of fraud (based on Morineau's two sets of figures) rose from 13-26 percent in the 1620s to as high as 85 percent in the 1640s. In short, the growing vigor of the illicit aspect of the carrera economy was nearly directly relative to the sinking legal one.¹²⁴

Table 1-15 also presents estimates of fraud at the Portobelo fairs made by Vila Vilar. Her method was to compare silver registration documents from Portobelo and Venta de Cruces. She correctly presumed that any differences in figures could be attributed to either mistakes in record keeping or illicit activity. After all, amounts registered in Cruces should have matched amounts arriving in Portobelo since there was nothing between them but several miles of tropical jungle. She discovered frequent large disparities in figures well beyond what might be explained away as mistakes. Registers of silver arriving in Portobelo on the

Table 1-15

Fraud Estimates in Treasure Imports and Fair Trading 1558-1659

Year	Fleet	Declared Treasure (-----pesos ensayados-----)	Estimated Actual Amount	Fraud (Percent)	Portobelo Fair Fraud (Percent)
1558	TF	-	-	50	-
1584	NS	2,340,480	-	-	-
1595	-	21,336,889	-	-	-
1596	TF/NS	7,253,333	8,462,222	14	-
1601	TF	-	-	-	75
1603	TF	-	-	-	50
1605	TF	-	-	-	50
1608	TF	-	-	-	75
1610	TF	-	-	-	75
1612	TF	-	-	-	75
1614	TF/NS	5,777,106	-	"much"	75
1616	TF	-	-	-	85
1617	TF	-	-	-	90
1618	TF	-	-	-	75
1619	TF	-	-	-	75
1620	TF	-	-	-	50
1621	TF	6,947,291	7,403,957	13	100+
1626	TF/NS	8,488,968	10,000,079	15	100+
1627	TF/NS	5,928,351	6,932,709	13	100+
1629	TF	3,369,778	5,137,778 or 6,830,222	26 50	100+
1630	TF/NS	4,367,750	5,963,348	26	100+
1630	TF	2,564,396	4,110,222 or 5,137,778	38 50	100+
1634	TF	1,815,248	5,137,778	65	100+
1636	TF/NS	3,020,535	6,758,956	57	100+
1641	TF	1,936,367	13,902,222	85	100+
1642	TF	1,905,436	-	"much"	100+
1643	NS	1,054,947	3,022,222	66	-
1643	TF	3,163,753	4,231,111 or 6,044,444	24 47	100+
1646	TF	488,771	2,805,831	83	100+
1648	NS	555,229	906,667	40	-
1649	TF/NS	2,538,667	6,648,889	66	100+
1651	TF/NS	2,648,153	3,445,333	24	100+
1653	TF	648,044	3,022,222	78	100+
1656	TF	1,813,333	4,472,889	58	100+
1659	TF/NS	3,916,182	14,995,648	66	100+

Note: dashes indicate information not available/applicable. Data on treasure fraud are from Morineau, Incroyables Gazettes et Fabuleux Métaux, p. 242; data on fair fraud (which refers only to merchandise) come from Vila Vilar, "Las Ferias de Portobelo," p. 67. I have converted figures into pesos ensayados.

trafín were always less than the amount registered in Cruces. Indeed, her findings demonstrate that during the early years of the seventeenth century, the regular rate of fraud was about 75 percent of the total, a figure which rose to 100 percent after 1620.¹²⁵ It should be noted that Vila Vilar's figures refer only to merchandise and silver brought from Panama City for trading. The findings of Morineau and Vila Vilar are mutually supportive and provide some insight into the quantity of clandestine trading activity.

By the mid seventeenth-century the crown freely admitted that smuggling in the Indies trade was out of control, acknowledging at the same time that there was little that could be done to check the problem. Instead of providing the means for more rigorous enforcement of existing laws, Philip IV's government took a novel approach known as the indulto system to compensate for presumed smuggling. The realization of just how extensive smuggling was came as a result of extensive inspections carried out in 1650 and 1662 by the visitadores Bartolomé Morquecho and Diego Venegas de Valenzuela respectively. After these visitas, the crown organized the indulto system along two lines. First, the indulto general was an assesment (much like the avería) on an entire fleet or group of merchants. By announcing a set fee, the crown no longer had the obligation to register and inspect actual cargoes, instead satisfying itself with what

it considered to be a fair tax take. Indeed, these obligations were directly shifted to the consulados since they were the organ singled out to pay the indulto up front. The consulados then taxed both member and nonmember participants in carrera commerce to pay for the assessment.¹²⁴ In addition to set fees on fleets or groups of merchants, an indulto was also assessed on cargoes of French cloth (once as high as 500,000 pesos) and navíos sueltos to minor New World ports. A detailed example of indulto assessments (for 1659) is presented in table 1-15. The highest indulto general ever assessed was 2,500,000 pesos in 1692.

A second type of indulto was the indulto particular, which was assessed against individual merchants who were caught smuggling. Indultos particulares usually ranged from 1,000 to 2,000 pesos each, though fines as high as 10,000 pesos were levied in some cases.¹²⁵ Indultos particulares were, for the most part, rare and of small consequence if only because few merchants were ever caught involved in contraband traffic. After all, the entire indulto system was devised so as to relieve the crown of patrolling against these contrabandists. The indulto system remained intact well into the eighteenth century when it became a formal tax (5 percent, after 1730, 9 percent).

All in all the crown's program against smuggling was a failure. The stakes were so high that individuals were willing to take the great risks that more often than not

resulted in equally great private fortunes. Quick fixes, especially the indulto system, did provide the crown with additional income over the short-term, but in the end they strengthened smuggling by further removing close crown inspection of cargoes.

Notes

1

See the landmark study by John Ramsey, Spain: The Rise of the First World Power (University, Alabama, 1973). Other studies useful for background (the period before Charles V) include J. Lee Schneider, The Rise of the Aragonese-Catalan Empire, 1200-1350 2 vols. (New York, 1970); William Phillips, Enrique IV and the Crisis of Fifteenth-Century Castile (Cambridge, 1978); John Elliott, Imperial Spain, 1469-1716 (New York, 1964); Jaime Vicens Vives, Approaches to the History of Spain (Berkeley, 1970); and H. Mariéjol, The Spain of Ferdinand and Isabella (New Brunswick, 1961); R. Konetzke, El imperio Español: orígenes y fundamentos (Madrid, 1946). Also of principal importance, though somewhat dated, are the first two volumes of Roger Bigelow Merriman's The Rise of the Spanish Empire in the Old World and in the New (I. The Middle Ages; II. The Catholic Kings) (New York, 1918); and William Prescott's first great work, History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella the Catholic 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1837). The most useful detailed guide to Spanish history is don Modesto Lafuente, Historia General de España 13 vols. (Madrid, 1861-1864). This copy is the "edición económica," though the price at the used book store where I came across it was hardly "economical."

2

In a sense this study of the Isthmus of Panama is also a study of Spanish history proper, and accordingly it is justifiable to engage in a limited bibliographic endeavor for this section of the chapter. The following are some of the works I have found useful in accessing Charles V's reign. First and most important is Karl Brandt's 600 page overview, The Emperor Charles V: The Growth and Destiny of a Man and of a World-Empire (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1980), translated

by C. V. Wedgwood. Also useful--Elliott calls it indispensable--is the third volume of Merriman's The Rise of the Spanish Empire in the Old World and in the New: The Emperor (New York, 1925). Much of Merriman's information has been updated in John Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs I: Empire and Absolutism, 1516-1598 (Oxford, 1965). For relations with the Ottoman Empire, see Lewis Ranke The Ottoman and the Spanish Empires in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (London, 1843), while treatment of the Reformation in Germany is well detailed in Roland Bainton, The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century (Boston, 1952) which gives more space to political coverage than to theological debates. More detailed treatment can be found in J. Lortz, The Reformation in Germany, 2 vols., (New York, 1968) and in Lucien Febvre, Un Coeur Religieux du XVIe siecle (Paris, 1957). The important interconnection between events in Germany and in the eastern Mediterranean are discussed in S. A. Fisher-Galati, Ottoman Imperialism and German Protestantism, 1521-55 (London, 1959). Extended commentary on Spanish imperial finances during the reign of Charles is in R. Carande, Carlos V y sus banqueros, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1943 and 1949) and Miguel Ladero Quesada, La hacienda real de Castilla en el siglo XVI (Tenerife, 1973) in which the reliance of Spain on central European banks for stop-gap financing can be seen to develop from 1519 onward. Little treatment, however, is given to the still unimportant New World aspect of financial policy. A final useful study--if only because it is the most recent--is A. W. Lovett, Early Hapsburg Spain, 1517-1598 (New York, 1987) which also covers the reign of Philip II. Though Lovett envisioned this book as a general introduction (indeed, there are no notes, etc.), the narrative does serve to summarize recent scholarship, though presenting no major reinterpretations.

3

In addition to the volumes cited above (especially Lynch and Elliott), for treatments of Philip II see Prescott's History of the Reign of Philip The Second, King of Spain 3 vols. (Boston, 1856), which reports details hard to find elsewhere, and Peter Pierson Philip II of Spain (London, 1975). The best general study on the era of Philip II, especially from the vantage of southern Europe, is Fernand Braudel, The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II 2 vols. (New York, 1966). John Elliott, Europe Divided, 1559-1598 (New York, 1968) also gives a general overview, with that scholar's usual insight. A basic source is volume 4 of Merriman's The Rise of the Spanish Empire in the Old World and in the New: Philip the Prudent (New York, 1934). On relations with England and the Armada see Garrett Mattingly, The Defeat of the Spanish Armada (London, 1959), and on relations in general see Fernández Alvares, Política

mundial de Carlos V y Felipe II (Madrid, 1966). Discussion of the Dutch crisis represents a major piece of the bibliography relating to European history of the era, but a few studies stand out: C. J. Cadous, Philip of Spain and the Netherlands (London, 1947); Pieter Geyl, The Revolt of the Netherlands (London, 1962) and G. Parker, The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1559-1567 (New York, 1972). An essential source is J. L. Motley The Rise of the Dutch Republic 3 vols. (New York, 1855) which has seen many editions since its first appearance.

4

The most careful reader will note a disparity in the table figures. The five-year total in table 1-1 covering the years 1616-1620, for example, is 5,217,346 ducats (4,347,788 pesos) inclusive of both New Spain and Peru, but in table 1-3, the crown returns from Peru alone amount to 7,520,620 pesos. The reason for the disparity is that the figures in table 1-1 come from Earl J. Hamilton's landmark but somewhat dated American Treasure and the Price Revolution in Spain, 1501-1650 (Cambridge, 1934) p. 34. Tables 1-2 and 1-3, on the other hand, are compiled from Alfredo Castellero Calvo's more recent Economía terciaria y sociedad Panamá siglos XVI y XVII (Panama, 1980) pp. 51-57 which is based on more current work in Sevilla. For the most part--and certainly for the reign of Philip II--the two data sets are in general agreement.

5

Many scholars date the beginning of Spain's real problems to the late sixteenth century (1588 often serving as a convenient turning point), most notably Pierre Vilar in his La Catalogne dans l'Espagne moderne; Recherches sur les fondements économiques des structures nationales (Paris, 1962). An interesting and somewhat novel approach is that taken by Jonathan Israel in his recent The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World, 1606-1661 (New York, 1982) where he states that Philip III's government did not at all embrace a more limiting approach to activity in Europe, but rather it temporarily set aside the Dutch crisis to pursue more pressing Mediterranean issues with full vigor. The essential general works on the decline of Spain are these: Earl Hamilton, "The Decline of Spain," in E. M. Carus-Wilson, ed., Essays in Economic History (New York, 1966), pp. 215-226 which is a reprint of Hamilton's classic article from the 1930s; John Elliott, "The Decline of Spain," in Norman Cantor and Michael Werthman, eds., Early Modern Europe, 1450-1650 (New York, 1967) pp. 149-207 which summarizes much of the detail available in his Imperial Spain; Henry Kamen, "The Decline of Castile: The Last Crisis," Economic History Review 17:1 (1964) pp. 63-76 which dovetails with much late

seventeenth-century material he later presented in his Spain in the Late Seventeenth Century, 1655-1700 (London, 1980). In this book Kamen dates the Spanish recovery--traditionally held to have begun with the arrival of the Bourbons--to the era of Charles II. A final work dealing exclusively with Spain's decline is Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, Crisis y decadencia en la España de los Austrias (Barcelona, 1971). Several useful studies are available that place the Spanish decline in the wider European context. Foremost among these are Fernand Braudel, Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century, III: The Perspective of the World (New York, 1979) and Immanuel Wallerstein, The Modern World-System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750 (New York, 1980). Especially noteworthy is Wallerstein's bibliography (pp. 291-349) which is inclusive, if nothing else. More brief treatment can be found in Jan de Vries, The Economy of Europe in an Age of Crisis, 1600-1750 (Cambridge, 1976) and E. H. Hobsbawm, "The General Crisis of the European Economy in the Seventeenth Century," Past and Present 5 (1954) pp. 33-53 and 6 (1954) pp. 44-65.

6

Excellent illustrations of Spain's domestic stagnation and decline is found in the celebrated picaresque novels of the era. A general discussion of the novels in and of themselves is found in Marcelin Defourneaux, Daily Life in Spain in the Golden Age (Stanford, 1970), pp. 212-228. The more significant novels are Guzmán de Alfarache, atalaya de la vida humana, no author, which was published in 1619 and the earlier Lazarillo de Tormes which has seen numerous editions, the most recent of which is the Penguin Classic, Two Spanish Picaresque Novels: Lazarillo de Tormes and The Swindler, Michael Alpert, translator, (New York, 1969). Cervantes' Don Quixote, and his other novels, of course, fit to some extent into the picaresque tradition in that they depict a Spain in decay. A detailed analysis of the picaresque phenomenon can be found in Deleito Piñuela, La mala vida en la España de Felipe IV (Madrid, 1950).

7

The bibliography on Philip III is not nearly as extensive as on earlier Hapsburg monarchs in Spain. In his bibliography Elliott goes as far back as 1887 to find an important general work on the reign--E. Rott, "Philippe III et le duc de Lerme," Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique, 1 (1887). Also see Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs II: Spain and America, 1598-1700 (Oxford, 1969), pp. 14-55. Some material is contained

in Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, The Golden Age of Spain, 1516-1659 (New York, 1971), but not much more than in other general surveys.

8

Hamilton reports that eventually 60 percent of all silver from America passed through Panama (American Treasure and the Price Revolution, pp. 47, 56).

9

Unlike the bibliography on Philip III, that of Philip IV and Olivares is much more extensive. Of principal importance and recent vintage is John Elliott's Richlieu and Olivares (New York, 1984) which traces the relationship between Spain and France during the pre-1640 era. Another study on Olivares, though one difficult because it is written in Catalan, is Dámaso de Lario, El Compte-Duc D'Olivares I el Regne de Valencia (Valencia, 1986). Works dealing with Philip IV in particular are Martin Hume, The Court of Philip IV (London, 1907) and A. Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios del reinado de Felipe IV 2 vols. (Madrid, 1927). A vital study of the era's finances is Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, Política y hacienda de Felipe IV (Madrid, 1960), though this volume was unavailable to the present writer. Its contents, however, are taken into account in Elliott's chapters on this period in Imperial Spain. The most recent book on Philip IV--a full-scale rehabilitation--is R. A. Stradling, Philip IV and the Government of Spain, 1621-1665 (New York, 1988).

10

See Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs ii pp. 168-169. On devalued copper coinage, see Hamilton's studies as well as Domínguez Ortiz, The Golden Age, pp. 300-301.

11

Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs ii, pp. 71-72.

12

Ibid., and Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, "Los cuadales de Indias y la política exterior de Felipe IV," Anuario de estudios americanos 13 (1956) pp. 311-383.

13

A discussion of Spain's activities in Brazil in the 1620s is found in C. R. Boxer, The Dutch in Brazil, 1624-1654 (Oxford, 1957) and his Salvador de Sá and the Struggle for Brazil and Angola (London, 1952).

14

The crown was forced to declare bankruptcy in 1627.

15

Two good works are available on Spinola and his role in the Thirty Years War: Joseph Lefevre, Spinola et la Belgique, 1601-1627 (Brussels, 1947) and A. Rodríguez Villa, Ambrosio Spinola, primer marqués de los Balbases (Madrid, 1905). On the Thirty Years War in general see C.V. Wedgwood, The Thirty Years War (London, 1938) which on occasion ties fortunes in central Europe to Spain and the New World (pp. 414-444 in the 1961 paper edition). Also see the remarkable volume in The New Cambridge Modern History edited by J. P. Cooper: IV The Decline of Spain and the Thirty Years War, 1609-48/59 (Cambridge, 1970) which excellently synthesizes a gigantic bibliography.

16

Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs ii, p. 76; also see Manuel Fernández Alvarez, Don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba y la guerra de sucesión de Mantua y del Monferrato (1627-1629) (Madrid, 1955).

17

Hamilton, American Treasure and the Price Revolution, pp. 34-35.

18

Vicens Vives goes so far as to directly blame Spain's 1640 crisis on the inability of American bullion to prop up the war effort: "There, in America, is to be found the key to (Olivares') failure in Europe...and it was the reason for the secession of Portugal and of Catalonia." An Economic History of Spain (Princeton, 1969), p. 106. On the delicate balance that Spanish subsidies to the Holy Roman Empire helped maintained, see B. Chudoba Spain and the Empire, 1519-1653 (Chicago, 1952) pp. 254-255 (and for an earlier 1594 similar crisis, p. 172). In the bibliography of the Catalonia revolt, John Elliott's The Revolt of the Catalans (Cambridge, 1963) stands most highly regarded, while J. Sanabre, La acción de Francia en Cataluña (Barcelona, 1956) details the role of France in the uprising. Little has been written of the Portuguese independence movement, though some details are available in Stanley Payne, A History of Spain and Portugal 2 vols., (Madison, 1973) and H. V. Livermore, A New History of Portugal (Cambridge, 1969), especially pp. 170-172.

19

See R. Treavor Davies, Spain in Decline, 1621-1700 (London, 1957) pp. 67-68 and Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs ii, pp. 121-123.

20

The bibliography on Charles II is not extensive. In addition to works by Henry Kamen cited above (which present the revisionist view of the reign), see the Duque de Maura, Vida y reinado de Carlos II, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1885) and the same author's Carlos II y su Corte, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1911-1915). Two biographical accounts, both aimed at the general reader, are John Nada, Carlos the Bewitched (London, 1962) and John Langdon-Davies, Carlos: The King Who Would Not Die (Englewood Cliffs, 1962).

21

A discussion of eighteenth-century Spain, brief though it is, is to be found in chapter 2 (see chapter 2, note 142 for bibliography relating to the eighteenth century Caribbean). A very general discussion of the themes of eighteenth-century Spanish history is to be found in Richard Herr, The Eighteenth Century Revolution in Spain (Princeton, 1958). More detailed political commentary can be found in volume 2 of Stanley G. Payne's History of Spain and Portugal, especially pp. 351-452. The two best overviews of the balance of power are Penfield Roberts, The Quest for Security, 1715-1740 (New York, 1947) and Walter L. Dorn, Competition for Empire, 1740-1763 (New York, 1940), both of the esteemed Langer series. A useful compilation of documents in English is W. N. Hargreaves-Mawdsley, Spain Under the Bourbons, 1700-1833 (Columbia, 1973).

22

The basic bibliography on the carrera de Indias is extensive and is discussed in detail in the notes to this chapter and the next. The most important overviews are, however, as follows: C. H. Haring, Trade and Navigation Between Spain and the Indies in the Time of the Hapsburgs (Cambridge, 1918), which presents the classic account based on Josephe de Veitia Linaje's famed Norte de la contratación de las Indias occidentales (Sevilla, 1672). This volume has been published in an abridged English edition titled The Spanish Rule of Trade to the West Indies (London, 1702), the first edition of which, believe it or not, is still circulating in the general undergraduate collection at the University of California at Berkeley. Of principal importance to the study of the carrera is the Pierre and Huguette Chaunu's multivolume Seville et l'Atlantique 8 volumes in 12, (Paris, 1955-1959). On Sevilla, see Ruth Pike, Aristocrats and Traders: Sevillian Society in the Sixteenth Century (Ithica, 1964). A general overview of the mercantile theory that underscored the carrera may be found in Raymond Bona, Essai sur le probleme mercantiliste en Espagne au XVIIe

siecle (Bordeaux, 1911). A good summary of current thinking on the Indies trade can be found in Murdo MacLeod's contribution to The Cambridge History of Latin America II, Leslie Bethell, ed., (Cambridge, 1987).

23

See Vicens Vives, An Economic History of Spain, p. 327; John Parry, The Spanish Seaborne Empire (New York, 1966), especially chapters 1, 2, 6, and part IV; José Larraz López, La época del mercantilismo en Castilla, 1500-1700 (Madrid, 1943); Ramsey, Rise of the First World Empire, pp. 238-271. For a guide for the further exploration of this, see Robert-Herni Bautier, "Sources pour l'histoire du commerce maritime en Méditerranée du XIIe au XVe siècle," Colloque international d'histoire maritime, 1st, Paris, 1956, (Paris, 1957).

24

Trade was tightly controlled from the beginning, except for the brief period 1495-1503 when trade was opened to any participant (Haring, Trade and Navigation p. 5).

25

The distance from Spain to Portobelo was 4,300 miles (8 weeks by sail). A good source on the trade routes, though one that is hard to find in the United States, is Alfredo Castellero Calvo, América Hispana: aproximaciones a la historia económica (Panama, 1983), especially chapter 2, "La Navegación." Much information, especially on the Atlantic crossing (though the emphasis is on Portuguese routes to Brazil) is T. Bentley Duncan, Atlantic Islands: Madeira, the Azores, and the Cape Verdes in Seventeenth-Century Commerce and Navigation (Chicago, 1972). The development of these routes, and of the carrera infrastructure through the final touches of the 1560s is contained in Haring, Trade and Navigation, pp. 185-211.

26

This is discussed in some detail in George Dilg, "The Collapse of the Portobelo Fairs: A Study in Spanish Commercial Reform, 1720-1740," Ph. D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1975, chapter 1, especially p. 9.

27

The fleets were supposed to sail according to a fixed schedule (the New Spain fleet to leave in April, the Tierra Firme fleet in August), but administrative, commercial, and technical problems made frequent delays the rule.

On the ships of the carrera themselves (construction, types, armament, etc), there are a few useful studies, the

two most recent--both very good--being Carla Rahn Phillips, Six Galleons for the King of Spain: Imperial Defense in the Early Seventeenth Century (Baltimore, 1986), and Fernando Mangas, Los galeones de la carrera de Indias, 1650-1700 (Seville, 1985). Also significant is Frederico Castro y Bravo, Los naos españoles en la carrera de las Indias: armadas y flotas en la segunda mitad del siglo XVI (Madrid, 1927). The Mediterranean background is detailed in John F. Guilmartin, Gunpowder and Galleys: Changing Technology and Mediterranean Warfare at Sea in the Sixteenth Century (Cambridge, 1974). Technological innovations are explored in John Parry, The Age of Reconnaissance (New York, 1963), especially pp. 67-145. A more detailed discussion of the actual construction and design of seventeenth-century ships is found in two articles by William Baker, "Early Seventeenth-Century Ship Design," American Neptune 14 (1954) pp. 262-277 and "The Arrangement and Construction of Early Seventeenth-Century Ships," American Neptune 15 (1955) pp. 259-286. A. P. Usher's "Spanish Ships and Shipping in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," Facts and Factors in Economic History (Cambridge, 1932) pp. 189-211 is considered a classic. A contemporary source of some merit is Tomé Cano, Arte para fabricar y aparejar naos (1611). On armaments, see I.A.A. Thompson, "Spanish Armada Guns," Mariner's Mirror 61 (1975) pp. 355-371.

28

See Haring, Trade and Navigation, pp. 215-216; Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs II, pp. 164, 167.

29

Very little has been done on the Casa de Contratación, other than the fair treatment it receives in Haring (Trade and Navigation, pp. 21-45), Chaunu (Seville et l'Atlantique, throughout) and Gildas Bernard, "La Casa de Contratación de Sevilla, luebo de Cádiz, en el siglo XVIII," Anuario de estudios Americanos 12 (1955) pp. 253-286.. Also see Veitia Linaje's Norte de la contratación for the everyday workings of the institution.

30

Unlike the Casa de Contratación, several good works are available on the Consulados, the development of which is traced in Robert Smith, The Spanish Guild Merchant: A History of the Consulado, 1250-1700 (Durham, 1940), chapter 6. The basic organization of the Consulado in Sevilla is told in Lutgardo Garcia Fuentes, El comercio Español con América (1650-1700) (Sevilla, 1980), pp. 23-108. Useful information is contained in M. Moret, Aspects de la Société Marchands de Seville au debut du s. XVII (Paris, 1967). Dilg ("Collapse of the Portobelo Fairs") is strong on the consulado of Lima.

Also see María E. Rodríguez Vicente, El tribunal del consulado de Lima en la primera mitad del siglo XVII (Madrid, 1960), which is an essential starting point for study of the Lima guild.

31

See Haring, Trade and Navigation, p. 10.

32

A detailed account of the sixteenth-century development of the avería can be found in Haring, Trade and Navigation, pp. 70-82. The most important study of this tax is Guillermo Céspedes del Castillo, La avería en el comercio de Indias (Sevilla, 1945). Leopoldo Zumalacárregui's "Contribución al estudio de la avería en el siglo XVI y principios del XVII," Anales de economía 4 (1944) pp. 383-424 is also useful, though overshadowed by Céspedes del Castillo. Additional information on this and other Spanish taxes can be found in Carande, Carlos V y sus banqueros and Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs.

33

See Haring, Trade and Navigation, pp. 77-78. After Drake's circumnavigation, the avería on Pacific commerce was increased from .5 percent to 1 percent, and later it rose to 2 percent. See Haring, Trade and Navigation p. 83 and Rafael Antúñez y Acevedo, Memorias históricas sobre la legislación y gobierno del comercio de los Españoles con sus colonias de las Indias Occidentales (Madrid, 1797) pp. 190-192.

34

See Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs II, p. 163. on costs of outfitting escort galleons, see Phillips, Six Galleons, pp. 90-118 (she estimates provisioning and outfitting a galleon for one round trip could cost up to 50,000 ducats--two to three times the cost of the actual construction of a ship).

35

Hamilton, American Treasure, p. 37

36

See Haring, pp. 65, 81-82. The consulado of Peru was supposed to pay 350,000 ducats, that of Sevilla 171,000, indicating, if nothing else, both the power Sevillian merchants had in influencing the crown to pass the bill to the New World and how the Lima Consulado had grown well beyond the Sevilla guild in wealth.

37

See Hamilton, American Treasure, p. 13.

38

Haring, Trade and Navigation, p. 84.

39

Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs II, p. 164.

40

Ibid., and Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, "Los cuadales de Indias," p. 314. According to Veitia Linaje, the alcabala tax was first placed on merchandise at the New World fairs in 1582 (Norte de la Contratación, lib. I, pp. 74-75). A general study of the alcabala is Salvador de Moxó, La Alcabala (Madrid, 1963), and some information can be found in Ismael Sánchez-Bello, La organización financiera de las Indias (siglo XVI) (Sevilla, 1968).

41

Haring Trade and Navigation pp. 86-87.

42

Preconquest Panama is best described by Mary W. Helms in her Ancient Panama: Chiefs in Search of Power (Austin, 1979). Other important contributions to this very underworked topic are Olga F. Linares, Ecology and Art in Ancient Panama (Washington D. C., 1977); Samuel Lothrop, Coclé, an Archaeological Study of Central Panama 2 vols., (Cambridge: 1937-1942) and his Archaeology of Southern Veraguas, Panama (Cambridge, 1950).

On the discovery and conquest of Panama, the principal work is Mario Góngora, Los grupos de conquistadores en Tierra Firme, 1509-1530: Fisonomía histórico-social de un tipo de conquista (Santiago, 1962). C. L. G. Anderson's Old Panama and Castilla del Oro (New York, 1911) also contains useful details, though the reader should take care to note his many errors in details. Another principal work, strongest on the exploration side, is Carl O. Sauer, The Early Spanish Main (Berkeley, 1966). On Balboa, the most outstanding figure of Panama's conquest era, see Kathleen Romoli, Balboa of Darien (New York, 1953). On his rival, Pedrarias, see Pascual de Andagoya, Narrative of the Proceedings of Pedrarias Davila, (London, 1865) and Ricardo Fernández Guardia, History of the Discovery and Conquest of Costa Rica (New York, 1913). Activity in Panama during the conquest era is also discussed in the various works dealing with the conquests of Peru and Nicaragua.

Although later Panamanian history saw a shift to a near exclusive concern with the trájín as an economic base, during the first years of settlement other industries developed, though few of them survived the sixteenth century. Principal among these other industries was pearl fishing on the Pacific

coast. The recovery of pearls so large that they fetched as much as 50,000-100,000 pesos each led to frantic overfishing and eventual extinction of the beds (see Alfredo Castillero Calvo, América Hispana, pp. 9-11). North of Veragua there was some early gold production, but this, like the limited gold mining in central Panama, was not profitable enough to sustain the industry. Veragua, like Nata and Chiriquí, however, soon found a new industry in cattle raising. By 1590 herds had grown to such an extent that over 150,000 head could be counted. But because of the isolation of these provinces, the cattle were worth little, selling for as little as 1.5 reales (1590) to 6 reales (1607) per head (see Castillero Calvo, América Hispana pp. 9-11 again, as well as his La fundación de la villa de Los Santos (Panamá, 1971). The only other important industry, one which dates to the years of Balboa's discovery and exploration of the Pacific coast, was shipbuilding. By 1600 ships of 45 to 130 tons were being built in Panama, but during the first years of the seventeenth century, Realejo in Nicaragua supplanted Panama City as the principal site of ship construction in Central America. On this, see Woodrow Borah, Early Colonial Trade and Navigation Between Mexico and Peru (Berkeley, 1954) p. 5, and David Radell and James J. Parsons, "Realejo: A Forgotten Colonial Port and Shipbuilding Center in Nicaragua," HAHR 51:2 (May, 1971) pp. 295-312. General treatment of Panama and southern Central America in the sixteenth century can be found in D. Manuel M. de Peralta, Costa-Rica, Nicaragua, y Panamá en el siglo XVI (Madrid, 1883) which presents a host of original documents, only a few of which deal directly with Panama (pp. 296-298; 451-455; 527-540; 578-590).

43

"Junta de puerto á S.M., 29 Julio de 1588 sobre los caminos de Nombre de Dios," AGI Indiferente General 1887.

44

Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista, y organización de América y Oceana, (Madrid, 1864-1884) in 42 vols., ix, pp. 112-113. Other early descriptions are compiled in Charles Anderson, Old Panama and Castilla del Oro, pp. 269-292.

45

Samuel de Champlain, Narrative of a Voyage to the West Indies and Mexico, 1599-1602 (London, 1859), pp. 40-41.

46

Colección de libros y documentos referentes a la historia de América (Madrid, 1904-1908), p. 141.

47

See, for example, documents in AGI Contaduría 1506, fols. 477-476.

48

These figures are discussed in Alfredo Castellero Calvo, Economía terciaria pp. 34-39. For information relating to individual years, see the following documents in AGI Panamá 32: the cabildo of Portobelo to the crown, July 2, 1620; "Información de la Real Audiencia, Panamá" 29 May 1618; the cabildo of Portobelo to the crown, 22 December 1676; and Mercado de Villacorta to the crown, Portobelo 14 January 1679. The preference for living in Panama City over Portobelo is mentioned frequently in many documents, but succinctly in Governor Rodrigo de Vivero to the crown, Portobelo 14 September 1622 (AGI Panamá 17) and López de Cañizares to the crown, Portobelo 10 August 1623 (AGI Panamá 34a).

49

See Enriqueta Vila Vilar, "Las ferias de Portobelo: Aperiencia y realidad del comercio con Indias," Revista Lotería 358 (1986) pp. 39-93; Audiencia of Panama to the crown, Panama 11 July 1604, AGI Panamá 15.

50

This information comes from Castellero Calvo, Economía terciaria, p. 37 where he reports the slave populations as follows: 1575, 2,809; 1607, 3,696; 1778, 2,966; 1789, 2,793; and 1790, 2,321.

51

There has been remarkably little written on the roads themselves, the only major source (thorough but somewhat dated) is Roland Hussey, "Spanish Colonial Trails in Panama," Revista de historia de América 6 (1939), pp. 47-74, in which the author notes the scarcity of original sources detailing everything from routes to logistics--so much so that he offers official censorship as probable cause (p. 58). Some information is available in Haring, Trade and Navigation, pp. 181-182. Much of the following discussion comes from my own superficial and very unscientific pokings around on the roads themselves in Panama.

52

Peter Martyr's description dates to 1524 and is cited in Hussey, "Trails," p. 51.

53

See Haring, Trade and Navigation pp. 181-182.

54

The very edge of the road--comprised of the larger stones--was built so as to be a few inches higher than the road. In some areas the road, thus, could be filled with fine sand for smoother passage. Even so, the roads were of such poor quality that even on flat stretches, no carts or waggons were ever used. Instead, all merchandise was carried either by mules or slave. See Hussey, "Trails," pp. 68-69.

55

The tax was proclaimed in the royal cédula of 2 December, 1593, Archivo Nacional de Panamá (hereinafter, ANP).

56

The "small" Río Pequeño venta was large enough to keep 500 mules in its yard. See Hussey, "Trails," pp. 67-68.

57

A useful source for the exploration of the various transisthmian routes is Manuel Serrano y Sanz, Archivo de Indias y exploraciones del Istmo de 1521 a 1534 (Madrid, 1911), which provides useful direction for the further study of the topic. On the Chagres route, a late sixteenth-century description reads as follows: En este dicho camino hay el lodo que digo y grandes cenagales en donde atuellan y caen las mulas y traen trasquiladas las colas sin cerdas en ellas a causa del dicho lodo porque menea las colas y ensucian las cargas y mercancías y no traen más que los masteles. Y es tanto lo que llueve y el dicho calor que hace, que no pueden caminar si no es a horas y tiempos porque si caminasen por las siestas y ente día las recuas se encalmarían, como muchas veces se han caído y cada día caen muertas por poca demasía que se les haga. . . . Porque se andan las dicho cinco leguas que salen de dicho Panamá las recuas para las dichas Cruces por medio del calor a puesta de sol, y andan de noche las dicha cinco leguas, y hacen las cargas en dichas Cruces, y otro día hacen su viaje, y empiezan a cargar anocheciendo para poder ir en la noche presente al dicho Panamá antes que amanezca y les tome el dicho calor en el camino, porque empieza a las ocho del día y convíeneles dar gran prisa proque arde el sol como a mediodía de al mes de julio de aquí. . . . Y por temor del calor van corriendo las dichas bestias con un trote desgraciado y con grandes ciénagas que hay, van atollando y cayendo las dichas bestias cubiertas de sudor y de lodo. ("Información presentada al Consejo por Juan García de Hermosilla sobre derrotas al Perú y Nueva España y necesidad de abandonar la eescarga de la flota en Nombre de Dios y trasladarla a Trujillo y Puerto Caballos" AGI Justicia, 378/8).

58

This description actually dates to the early nineteenth century when the road was largely in disrepair. See Michael Scott, Tom Cringle's Log (Edinburgh, 1933) vol. ii, chapters 6-7. Also see Hussey, "Trails," pp. 60 and 70.

59

See Haring, Trade and Navigation, p. 182; Peralta, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, y Panamá, p. 527; and Hussey, "Trails," pp. 60-61.

60

These descriptions come from Hussey, "Trails," pp. 57-60.

61

Boat figures are discussed in Castellero Calvo, Economía terciaria, pp. 20-21. Also see "Probanza," Nombre de Dios, 6 May 1569, AGI Panamá 32; "Información de la Real Audiencia," Panama, 29 May 1618 AGI Panamá 32; and Antonio Carrillo de Guzmán to the crown, Portobelo, 3 February 1653, AGI Panamá 32. The boats that travelled the Chagres were restricted to those that drew less than 12 feet because of a ledge at the mouth of the river. This depth continued to Trinidad, after which point the average depth was five to six feet (Hussey, "Trails," p. 48).

62

"Mapa del Río Chagre, comprehensivo de los tres puestos que en el mosmo río se reconocen desde su boca donde está el sitio y Castillo de Chagre (que demolieron los ingleses el año de 1741) hasta el siio de Cruces, con los nombres de Gatun y la Trinidad los que se fortificaron y guarnecieron en la próxima pasada guerra con los yngleses," by Don Joseph Antonio Pineda, 23 Augusto de 1759, AGI mapas y Planas, Panamá 87.

63

This description comes from Hussey, "Trails," pp. 61-64; the quote is that of W. D. Wetherhead, in his Account of the Late Expedition Against the Ithmus (London, 1821), pp. 70-80, of which more in the last chapter of this dissertation.

64

The road to Portobelo was finished in 1597, the leg to Nombre de Dios abandoned that same year. A good accounting of the new construction is Villanueva Capata to the crown, Nombre de Dios, 12 March 1595, AGI Panamá 14; also see Audiencia of Panama to the crown, 4 June 1597 AGI Panamá 14, and Don Alonso de Sotomayor to the crown, 10 November 1597, AGI Panamá 14

65

The Toledo data is reported in Haring, Trade and Navigation, p. 183. Another, similar description of the roads can be found in Francesco Carletti, Razonamiento de mi viaje alrededor del mundo (1594-1610) (Mexico City, 1976), especially pp. 34-38.

66

Haring, Trade and Navigation, p. 183.

67

See Hussey, "Trails," p. 67, and J. Sosa and E. J. Arce, Compendio de la historia de Panamá (Panama, 1911), p. 165.

68

In 1549 the crown ordered that the few remaining Indians in Panama no longer be used in trajín transportation. It was from this date that mules became the principal device of carriage. Se María del Carmen Mena García, La sociedad de Panamá en el siglo XVI (Sevilla, 1984).

69

Castillero Calvo, América Hispana, p. 55. Some detailed information is available on the mule routes across New Granada. The route from Cartagena to Quito was as follows: (1) Cartagena to Honda by ship, 170 leagues; (2) Honda to La Plata, 8,000 mules over 100 leagues; (3) La Plata to Popayan, 5,000 mules over 40 leagues; (4) Popayan to Pasto, 6,000 mules over 10 leagues; (5) Pasto to Quito, 6,000 mules over 80 leagues. The total number of mules in service on this 14 month trip was in excess of 25,000. This information comes from Castillero Calvo, América Hispana, pp. 55-56.

70

The trip to Panama from the farthest reaches of the Central American mule country was about 2,000 kilometers. Thomas Gage accompanied one large mule delivery to Panama in 1637. See his A New Survey of the West Indies (London, 1958). MacLeod describes the mule route as first running along the Pacific coast as far as Granada, then across the plains between Lake Nicaragua and the Nicoya Peninsula. Trains often stopped in Cartago before continuing again along the Pacific coast through Quepo and Boruca whence they entered Panama. Because of the distance and the difficulty of the route, few muleteers engaged in supplying Panama with the beasts made great profit. (Spanish Central America: A Socioeconomic History, 1520-1720 (Berkeley, 1973), p. 274).

71

Castillero Calvo, Economía Terciaria, p. 25. Mules traveling to Panama through Costa Rica were taxed, providing some small additional funding for the Costa Rica caja real. See MacLeod, Spanish Central America, p. 274; León Fernández, Colección de documentos para la historia de Costa Rica (San José, 1976), vol. iii, pp. 312-330—"Ingresos y gastos de la real caja de Costa Rica y Nicaragua en el Quinquenio, 1654-58."

72

By 1575 Nata and Los Santos were producing as much as 30,000 fanegas of corn each year. See Castillero Calvo, Los Santos, pp. 55; also Sancho de Clavijo to the crown, Panama, 27 September 1551, AGI Panamá 29.

73

Mena García reports that even in the early seventeenth century some 500 botijas of corn were sent south to Peru (La sociedad de Panamá, p. 105, information confirmed by Castillero Calvo (América Hispana, p. 13). Regarding corsair attacks and the disruption of corn production, see Mena García, La sociedad, p. 112. Despite some years of surplus production, the general condition in Panama was one of food shortage: "Esta tierra no tiene pan de su cosecha, a no ser algún maíz en pequeña cantidad, y es tan malo que no sirve sino para los caballos, mulas, y recuas, y si alguna vez lo comen los hombres es por extrema necesidad, ya que al hacerlo sufren enfermedades y aún muertes." ("Probanza presentada por el cabildo de Panamá á S.M.,") Panama, 26 April 1583, AGI Panamá 30, to cite just one example of many. Much food was supplied by Costa Rica, which became an economic appendage to Panama in the sixteenth century. By 1650, however, most of Panama's imported food came from Peru, and by the 1680s trade in agricultural goods between Costa Rica and Panama had all but dried up (MacLeod, Spanish Central America, p. 275). A very important study of Costa Rica's food production for Panama is Carlos Meléndez, "Aspectos sobre la historia del cultivo del trigo durante la época colonial," in his collection of publications, Costa Rica: Tierra y poblamiento en la colonia (San José, 1978), pp. 99-127.

74

This line of reasoning is that of Castillero Calvo, though as yet it remains unpublished. My source, therefore, is my personal conversations with him in the summer of 1984.

75

Mena García, La sociedad de Panamá, p. 110.

76

In some cases the total cost of mules exceeded 50,000 pesos. Another large expense for arrieros was outfitting each mule for trajín service. For example, as many as 8,000 iron shoes were required each fair season for every 200 mules, so bad were the roads. Each shoe cost, on average, one peso each (Castillero Calvo, América Hispana, p. 8).

77

In 1596 as a result of Drake's raid on the north coast, the lot of the mule in Panama worsened. Instead of just transporting goods in the trajín, they were also put in service aiding in the construction of new fortifications. Many became so overworked that they died of fatigue. See "Acuerdo del presidente, oidores, y oficiales reales de Panamá con el virrey del Perú, marqués de Cañete," Panama, 16 May 1596, AGI Contaduría 1468.

78

Mena García, La sociedad de Panamá, p. 162; Hussey, "Trails," pp. 70-71. Castillero Calvo reports (Economía terciaria, p. 21) that the esclavos arrieros population was 401 in 1570 and 320 in 1607.

79

"Memorial de los vecinos de Panamá al rey," circa 1592, AGI Panamá 1; "Acuerdo de la Audiencia de Panamá," 18 June 1592, AGI Contaduría 1466; and Castillero Calvo, Economía terciaria, p. 27.

80

These figures come from royal account registers for the caja real de Panamá, AGI Contaduría 1452, various folios.

81

Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa, Compendium and Description of the West Indies (Washington D. C., 1942), p. 304. He also reports the cost of a mule hire from Panama to Portobelo to be 25-30 pesos (ibid.).

82

Castillero Calvo, Economía Terciaria, pp. 29-33; Villa Vilar, "Las ferias de Portobelo," pp. 45-46. Castillero Calvo has collected the following information (no years specified):

Route	Kilometers	Days of travel	Price/100 lbs
Panama-Portobelo	99	4	14.12 pesos
Huancavelica-Potosi	1,400	57	1.1 "
Mendoza-Santiago	441	19	1.4-2.3 "
Punta Arenas-Cartago	132	5.3	0.9 "
Acapulco-Veracruz	743	30	0.3 "

83

The development of the commercial fair in medieval Europe (especially in France) is discussed in most standard works on the period, most extensively in various contributions to the Cambridge Economic History series. The best discussion I have found is Fernand Braudel, The Wheels of Commerce: Civilization and Capitalism, 15th to 18th Century, II (New York, 1979), pp. 26-113. N.J.G. Pounds, in his An Economic History of Medieval Europe (New York, 1974) pp. 354-361, also discusses the material that Braudel covers, though in much less detail. Marc Bloch gives suprisingly little space to commercial fairs in Feudal Society 2 vols. (Chicago, 1974), though the few comments he makes (p. 70, for example) are typically insightful.

For a description of the Portobelo fair that places it in the context of European fairs (in this case that of Venice), see Pedro Cieza de León, La Crónica del Perú (Madrid, 1880), p. 45.

84

Problems in timing that led to delays in the New World fleet's return to Sevilla often led to bankruptcy at other Castilian fairs. The collapse cited in the text--that of Medina del Campo--came after 4 straight years of delays in the carrera (Jaime Vicens Vives, Economic History of Spain, pp. 375-376). Indeed, the fairs of Villalón, Medina de Rioseco, as well as Medina del Campo, were financed from silver imports from the Americas. The basic problem that plagued the Castilian fair system was that individual fairs had fixed dates, but the arrival of the fleets was irregular (ibid., pp. 374-376).

85

Vicens Vives, Economic History of Spain, p. 374.

86

Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, The Golden Century of Spain, pp. 302-303. Attman notes that despite the influx of silver, Europe still had a large trade deficit with Asia. He notes that in 1550, of the roughly 5 million pesos of American silver imported into Europe, 3 million eventually went to Asia; of 14 million in 1600, 4.4 million went to Asia; of 13 million in 1650, 6 million went to Asia, of 13 million in 1700, 8.5 million went to Asia; and of the 30 million in 1750, 12.2 million went to Asia. See Artur Attman, American Bullion in the European World Trade, 1600-1800 (Goteborg, 1986). p. 78. Some discussion of this topic is available--if brief--in Hamilton, War and Prices in Spain, 1651-1800 (Cambridge, 1947). pp. 9-54.

87

See Haring, Trade and Navigation, p. 225.

88

There is not an extensive bibliography on the New World fairs. The standard study, one that is very out dated and frequently misleading, is Allyn C. Loosley, "The Puerto Bello Fairs," HAHR 13:3 (1933) pp. 314-335. Enriqueta Vila Vilar's "Las Ferias de Portobelo," (see above, note 49), on the other hand, is a remarkable study based on thorough archival research. Dilg, "The Collapse of the Portobelo Fairs," covers the eighteenth century--his is a study that should be published. Studies of the fairs of New Spain also shed light on structure and practice at Portobelo: Manuel Carrera Stampa, "Las ferias novohispanas," Historia Mexicana 3:3 (1953) pp. 319-342; and José Joaquín Real Díaz, Las Ferias de Jalapa (Sevilla, 1959). Useful details on fairs are also provided in Haring, Trade and Navigation, part 1.

89

Dilg, "The Collapse of the Portobelo Fairs," p. 292.

90

Ibid., p. 288; In addition to controlling passage permits, the Panamanian authorities also controlled the sale of brokerage licenses, the possession of which was necessary for trading. Fees for such licenses ranged from 6,500 pesos in 1580, to 4,200 in 1607. See Haring, Trade and Navigation, p. 187.

91

Dilg, "Collapse of the Portobelo Fairs," pp. 282. In 1735 Lima consulado merchants had to pay 12,000 pesos to rebuild

the Panama City wharf, and 200,000 pesos for work on fortifications in Portobelo and Cartagena (ibid., p. 291).

92

Haring, Trade and Navigation, p. 91.

93

Dilg, "Collapse of the Portobelo Fair," p. 285.

94

Ibid., p. 283.

95

40 percent was the going rate in 1731. Ibid., pp. 283, 292.

96

Ibid., p. 286.

97

Lutgardo García Fuentes, El Comercio Español, p. 92.

98

Haring, Trade and Navigation, p. 189.

99

Gage, A New Survey of the West Indies, p. 330. Because of this and the other high costs incurred in Panama, goods in retailed in Peru for 800 to 1,000 percent more than in Spain, prices that denied European luxuries to all but the most wealthy persons.

100

Haring, Trade and Navigation, p. 91.

101

Ibid., p. 92.

102

Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs II, p. 167.

103

Haring, Trade and Navigation, p. 126; Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs II, p. 215; and Woodrow Borah, Early Colonial Trade and Navigation Between Mexico and Peru, p. 124.

104

Additional information on cargoes can be found in Lawrence Clayton, "Trade and Navigation in the Seventeenth-Century Viceroyalty of Peru," Journal of Latin American Studies 7:1

(1975) pp. 1-21, especially pp. 8-9. Additional information is available in Chaunu, Séville et l'Atlantique, on too many pages to list. Very significant details are presented in Lutgardo García Fuentes, El comercio, pp. 239-408, the specifics of which are presented in the source notes to the various charts in this chapter.

105

Peruleros should not be confused with "peruleiros," or Portuguese merchants trading with Peru via the Río de la Plata. Peruleros are discussed in Vila Vilar, "Las ferias de Portobelo," pp. 56-61; also see Chaunu, Séville et l'Atlantique, 6-4, p. 395 and Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs II, pp. 212-213. Also commentary on perulero wealth is contained in Descripción del virreinato del Perú: crónica inédita de comienzos del siglo XVII (Rosario, 1958), p. 59. Excellent background on the Peruvian merchant class is contained in James Lockhart, Spanish Peru: 1532-1560, A Colonial Society (Madison, 1968), pp. 77-95. The merchant communities of the Pacific coast of South America are also discussed in John Super, "Partnership and Profit in the Early Andean Trade: The Experiences of Quito Merchants, 1580-1610," Journal of Latin American Studies 11:2 (1979) pp. 265-281; and Harry E. Cross, "Commerce and Orthodoxy: A Spanish Response to Portuguese Commercial Penetration in the Viceroyalty of Peru, 1580-1640," The Americas 35:2 (1978) pp. 151-167.

106

Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs II, p. 196.

107

Ibid., p. 214; Rodríguez Vicente, El tribunal de Lima, pp. 40-76, for more detailed discussion of Peruvian markets and their control by the consulado.

108

Dilg, "The Collapse of the Portobelo Fairs," pp. 12-13.

109

Don Alonso de Sotomayor to the crown, 1 July 1600, AGI Panamá 15; Lutgardo García Fuentes, El comercio, p. 239.

110

As quoted in Haring, Trade and Navigation, p. 186.

111

Lutgardo García Fuentes, El comercio, pp. 243-245. Of the merchant community in Panama, Bautista Antonelli, concerned with the defense of the realm, wrote, "for as much as the most part of these people are merchants, they will not fight,

but only keep their own persons in safety and save their goods. . . ." (Haring, Trade and Navigation, p. 244.

112

Castillero Calvo, Economía terciaria, p. 44.

113

Vicens Vives, Economic History of Spain, p. 324. Lynch writes (Spain Under the Hapsburgs II, p. 167), "Plunder and parasitism made fraud and contraband a way of life. The monopoly system and high prices induced market conditions propitious for contraband; taxes and confiscations incited it; impecunious officials connived at it; naval authorities cooperated in it."

114

M. Morineau, Incroyables gazettes et fabuleux métaux: Les retours de trésors américains d'après les gazettes hollandaises (XVIIe--XVIIIe siècles) (Cambridge/Paris, 1985).

115

Hamilton, American treasure, p. 21.

116

Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs II, p. 167.

117

Rodríguez Vicente, El Tribunal, p. 262.

118

Hamilton, War and Prices in Spain, 1651-1800, p. 11-12, where one line reads that such tampering was done by "thieves, traitors, and enemies of mankind in Peru." Also, various documents, AGI Contratación 5180, folios 59-60; 128-130.

119

Casa de Contratación to the Consejo, Sevilla, 2 September 1626, AGI Contratación 5173; Cédula Real, 10 November 1575, AGI Panamá 15; Vila Vilar, "Las Ferias de Portobelo," p. 47; Also see Hamilton, American Treasure, p. 16.

120

Consejo to the Crown, 20 March 1627, AGI Panamá 1; also numerous documents regarding the construction of the aduana exist in AGI Panamá 34a.

121

Hamilton, American Treasure, pp. 21-22.

122

Ibid., pp. 17-23.

123

Sailors, however, were permitted to bring a small amount of unregistered silver, the abuse of which practice caused a 1646 law that stated this amount was not to exceed their regular salary (Hamilton, American Treasure, pp. 20-21.

124

Morineau, Incroyables Gazettes et Fabuleux Métaux, p. 242.

125

Vila Vilar, "Las ferias de Portobelo," p. 67.

126

Haring, Trade and Navigation, pp. 307-308. Half of the indulto was supposed to be paid by the consulados of the New World, half by that of Sevilla.

127

In 1663 Francisco Maleo paid this amount. See, in general, García Fuentes, pp. 136-158 for information on indultos particulares, and pp., 124-136 on indultos generales.

THE ISTHMIAN ECONOMY II: THE CYCLES OF EXCHANGE

"Historical monsters" is the term Braudel uses to describe the economic cycles of the world economy in the early modern era.¹ Indeed, the fluctuations of past economic activity are poorly understood and fervent debates regularly appear on the horizon as scholars come to grips with issues of quantity, quality, and chronology. A prime example from the standpoint of the Latin Americanist is, of course, the disagreement surrounding the so-called seventeenth-century depression--the New World manifestation of the "B-phase" of the "long sixteenth-century" European economy so well described by Wallerstein.² Not only are the bracket dates of the seventeenth-century economic slow down debated, but its very existence is called into question by those who argue statistical indicators of the era were impacted more significantly by economic reorientation than recession.³ Economic cycles in areas on the extreme periphery of the world economy--as in the case of so much of the Americas--are difficult to accurately describe in that the most useful

documents relating to commerce and trade center on questions of imperial import: international economies like the transatlantic commercial system are well documented, regional and local economies less so. In this regard the student of Panama, like those who study Seville, Callao, or other areas involved in international trading activity, is very fortunate. Imperial commerce was the backbone of the Panamanian economy, and thus the chronology of isthmian economic activity can be revealed through a review of the better documented international commerce.

Sources and Strategies

Until now, no single scholar has attempted to bring together economic data covering the whole gamut of Panamanian colonial history. A few general works, most of which are based on excellent archival research, are available, but none covers more than a part of the period under review. Without any doubt, Pierre and Huguette Chaunu's massive study of the Atlantic economy between 1503 and 1650 stands at the top of a list of such sources.⁴ Its many volumes provide essential data on shipping tonnages, and useful information on the specifics of the Panamanian economy for select years. Moreover, the copious documentation in the notes to part 6 of the study provide an excellent guide--almost an index--of AGI Contratación materials relating to the fleet system. In short, Séville et L'Atlantique is a historian's Potosí and,

in this case, has been mined as thoroughly as if it were an archival primary source.

For the period after Chaunu to 1700, the most useful study is by Lutgardo García Fuentes, though his single volume work presents only a bare outline of the late seventeenth-century Atlantic economic order.⁵ The eighteenth century is documented extensively in Antonio García-Baquero Gonzalez's two volume work, Cádiz y el Atlantico, 1717-1778, but little information regarding Panama is presented.⁶ Partially filling the eighteenth century gap are two useful studies relating directly to the Portobelo fairs of 1721, 1726, 1730, and 1739, the most important of which is George Dilg's 1976 dissertation "The Collapse of the Portobelo Fairs."⁷ Also deserving of special mention is Enriqueta Vila Vilar's, "Las ferias de Portobelo: apariencia y realidad del comercio con Indias," which principally addresses the early seventeenth century, and various works by Manuel Moreyra y Paz-Soldán, especially Estudios sobre el tráfico marítimo en la época colonial.⁸ These are the principal sources of statistics for the following pages. In addition, documents from legajos from the Archivo General de Indias, Contratación and Contaduría sections have been employed. The Contaduría documents form the existent archival holdings--as incomplete as they are--of the caja reales of Panama City and Portobelo.

As in the case of my previous studies using Spanish colonial shipping documents, I have found data regarding the economy of colonial Panama to be difficult to work with.⁹ Some statistical runs are available, the longest and best being Chaunu's tonnage data which, even if often estimated, provide a uniform data set from the arrival of the first flota to Tierra Firme in 1537 until the middle of the seventeenth century. Other runs such as alcabala figures from Contratación documents and data regarding the almojarifazgo tax contained generally in contaduría documents are available for much of the seventeenth century, as are some isthmian avería figures. For the period after 1650, the actual number of ships entering Portobelo each year are the only data regularly available. Hampering any attempt to sketch some kind of chronology of isthmian prosperity is the added burden of reconciling often disparate figures. For example, a total value for goods exchanged at the 1619 fair can be derived from avería receipts to be 276,986 pesos, while almojarifazgo receipts render a value of 317,800 pesos, figures nearly in agreement, though still disparate.¹⁰ A more serious disparity arises in the case of 1624 when three values of the goods at the fair have been discovered:¹¹ 12,831,501 pesos, 9,340,422 pesos, and 1,385,297 pesos. Again in 1649--and these are not isolated examples--alcabala figures put the value at 1,131,900 pesos, while almojarifazgo receipts indicate a value of only 243,830 pesos.¹²

Even if all these figures could be reconciled, or perhaps rendered into a statistical index, other factors remain that pose problems for figuring isthmian economic cycles. To be sure, when one notes that fairs were held every single year from 1649 to 1654 (even during the two decades around 1600 fairs were only every other year events), and when one sees that raw tonnage and treasury receipts were both up, it is logical conclude that the imperial economy during that period was quite sound, if not excellent. But when one looks into the correspondence and other non-statistical documentation (governors complaining that goods could not be sold at any price, or consulado members pleading with the Casa de Contratación not to send fleets every year) a different picture--a picture that cannot easily be reduced to tables or charts--is revealed. In the end, it is necessary to plod through the isthmian economy year by year to properly assess the prevailing economic climates.

This does not mean that statistical runs are not of any importance. On the contrary: taking everything as a whole and in proper context they can be very useful if one can determine which statistics are the most valuable for the study of the Panamanian economy. While tax figures and estimates of worth--even computations of Peruvian mining output--provide some indicators, they are all subject to two very important variables. First, they are often

contradictory, perhaps resulting from inaccurate bookkeeping or incomplete documentation at the archives, and second, they do not take into consideration the rampant fraud and illicit commercial activity that may have exceeded by as much as 50 percent the totals reported in previous historical studies.¹³ Other figures are more useful. As Chaunu points out, tonnage statistics are not as subject to these two essential flaws. It is, after all, much harder to hide a 300 ton nao than a 200 pound bag of silver. For this reason alone, maritime tonnage statistics must form the core of any study of the isthmian economy.¹⁴ The greatest problem with this data set is that not all tons count equally. On some occasions the crown refused to permit galleons in the escorting armadas, indeed any crown warship, from carrying merchandise to Tierra Firme. On other occasions, however, these ships probably carried the bulk of the cargo to and from the New World.¹⁵ It is impossible to tell when such proscriptions were followed, and when ignored. Instead of unravelling this impossibly tangled thread, it has been the rule in this study to count all tonnage figures cumulatively, even though this introduces an added element of inexactitude. This provides the researcher with reasonably accurate figures that can be used to judge the pulse of the economy, at least in a general sense. If one, therefore, assumes that ships generally did not sail to the New World in ballast--an assumption born out by the keen competition between Spanish

merchants in Seville and Cádiz to get their merchandise on any ship sailing west--raw tonnage data provide a very useful tool, especially if taken in context with other, non-statistical data.

Sadly, tonnages are not available for all years. Nevertheless, it is possible to accurately estimate total tonnage based on a linear regression solving for y , x being the actual number of ships registered as entering and leaving ¹⁶ Portobelo. Linear regression provides a means by which we can extend the raw tonnage data well beyond Chaunu's 1650 cut off date. The correlation value between numbers of arrivals and tonnages calculated over the period 1630-1650 is a surprisingly high .79, well within social scientific parameters.

A further statistical manipulation was undertaken following Braudel's model for establishing general trends, ¹⁷ i.e., the floating or sliding average. Taken in five year periods, the total tonnage run 1550-1700 was rendered into such an average in an attempt to detect economic cycles.

The economic cycles of the European Spanish economy, and by inference that of Spanish America, have been studied by numerous historians and well synthesized by Jaime Vicens Vives in his landmark, An Economic History of Spain. The sixteenth-century Spanish economy, according to Vicens Vives, can be divided into nine individual units: great inflation in

the 1520s; a remarkable year of economic expansion in 1530; a decade of contraction between 1530 and 1540; an extended period of steady upward growth from 1540 until 1561; still more accelerated expansion between 1561 and 1570; limited constriction in the 1570s; renewed expansion from 1581 to 1595; a five year period conveniently ending in 1600 representing the highpoint of the Hapsburg imperial economy; and finally a decade of stability lasting until 1610. The seventeenth-century decline, Wallerstein's "B phase," can also be divided into nine units: a period of diminishing trade and economic slow down beginning in 1610 and lasting until 1620; a significant economic crisis in the 1620s; a crisis in silver imports that dropped economic activity to still lower levels in the 1630s; a decade-long period of runaway inflation and economic stagnation in the 1640s; deflation and decline in the 1650s; sharp decline at alarming rates in the 1660s; slowed decline in the 1670s; lowpoint of the depression in the 1680s; and a sudden sharp rise in the last decade of the century.

The general cycles of Atlantic commercial activity have been calculated by Chaunu. from totals in east/west traffic, including, of course, commerce with New Spain and general return shipping.¹⁹ As in the Vicens Vives chronology, the Chaunu chronology provides a measure against which to judge isthmian activity. Chaunu has discerned the following fluctuations: a strong rise in shipping from 1530 to 1560; a

temporary plateau from about 1560 to 1565; another period of strong rise lasting until 1588; a short term crisis owing in part to the shipping shortage in the wake of the armada sent against England; renewed growth in the period 1589-1598; a slight decline between 1598 and 1605; the first great apogee from 1605 to 1610; a five year decline, though slight, ending in 1615; a second apogee from 1615 to 1620; and steady decline after 1620.

In the strictest sense of the term, the above economic time lines are chronologies of trends rather than "cycles," which have been defined by economists in precise terms. In the purest definition, cycles have been divided into five types according to temporal duration. The shortest, the Kitchin, runs two to four years and manifests itself (for our purposes) in the form of fleets sailing every other year from Spain to Panama. Next longest in duration is the Juglar, which lasts from six to eight years, a cycle also known as the intra-decade cycle. A twelve to fifteen year cycle--sometimes lasting longer--is called a labrousse, or intercycle. A Kuznets is just longer than the intercycle, running about two decades. The first of the long-term cycles, the Kondratieff lasts as long as sixty or seventy years, only superseded by Braudel's century-spanning "secular trend," the most overarching of all economic cycles.²⁰ These cycles, in the proper sense of the word, represent more than trends.

They describe the pulse of economic activity. The great expansion of the world economy led by Spain in the sixteenth century, and then the general seventeenth-century decline, again led by Spain, were more than unexpected fluctuations. They were the up and down sides of a repeating cycle of secular trends, barely noticeable at the time of their happening, yet in retrospect standing out sharply against the panorama of history.

These cycles provide an excellent means of analyzing the isthmian economy: just as Chaunu has identified Kitchin cycles in his work with Sevillian commerce, it is possible to discern the throb of activity on the isthmus.²¹ Before this is possible, however, a plodding year by year study of economic activity in Panama must be undertaken.

The Course of Isthmian Commerce

The Early Years, 1537-1579

Commercial activity in the period before 1550--the first ships arrived in 1509--was marked by the irregularity of the conquest era. After the 1530s, almost all transatlantic commercial contact with Panama was related to the conquest of Peru. Although the Chaunus begin Séville et l'Atlantique in 1503, most of the data from the early years are non-specific with regard to region and basic statistics. The maritime documentation of the conquest and immediate post-conquest era

is simply not sufficient to accurately reconstruct economic trends. Individual ships sailing all year round--and at least for a few years, from many Spanish ports--did not leave the paper trail characteristic of the fleet system of later years. It is known, however, that the first organized fleet to Tierra Firme--fourteen ships in all--sailed in 1537 under the command of Blasco Núñez Vela.²² Another fleet supposedly sailed in 1540 under Cosme Rodríguez de Farfán, though Chaunu makes no mention of any sailings. The 1542 fleet of Martín Alonso de los Ríos, on the other hand, is better documented. Hapsburg/Valois rivalry was reported as the reason for sailing ensemble, the convoy consisted of 27 ships with a capacity of at least 3990 tons. It returned a treasure valued at more than 450,000 pesos.²³ The next year, 1543, Núñez Vela again commanded the convoy. This time, however, he was destined to continue across the isthmus and sail to Peru to take up his last station in imperial service. In addition to carrying Charles V's New Laws, the flota brought a cargo valued at 131,160 pesos on 26 ships with a capacity of 3770 tons.²⁴

The last half of the 1540s saw a greater level of commercial activity than the first, reflecting the sharp rise in the imperial economy. By this time the first great returns from Peru were being sent back to Europe. For the most part, however, fleets were not the normal means of transatlantic shipping, individual sailings predominating.

1545 saw the arrival in Nombre de Dios of 42 ships that carried 693,440 pesos worth of merchandise, most of which arrived in November, December, and January, though the summer months saw 15 arrivals.²⁵ Arrivals in 1546 amounted to 33, carrying 760,180 pesos of merchandise; in 1547--a down year--17 ships; in 1548, 47 vessels carrying 1,164,420 pesos of merchandise; and in 1549, 45 ships valued at 948,820 pesos arrived.²⁶ The 1548 and 1549 figures reflect, in part, a return to convoys resulting from an acceleration in the Franco-Spanish war, the first fleet commanded by Pedro Milanés, and that of 1549 by Diego López de las Roelas. The 1549 fleet was the first to sail under the official designation "Armada de Tierra Firme," indicating an informal institutionalization of a developing mercantile system.

The decade of the 1550s was marked by economic strength during the first years, a period of uncertainty from 1554-1557, and a substantial decline, at least in tonnage figures, in the last two years, a decline that continued well into the 1560s. The decade saw a total of nine fairs celebrated, two each in 1551 and 1557, though none in 1554 and 1556.

The first fair of the decade, held under Pedro de la Gasca--or Sancho de Viedma and Hernando Blas, depending on the source consulted--consisted of 33 ships.²⁷ Moreyra y Paz-Soldán reported a value of 1,260,000 pesos. In 1551 two fleets arrived, and two fairs were celebrated on the beach at

Table 2-1
Flotas and Fairs of Tierra Firme, 1550-1559

YEAR	FAIRS	CAPTAIN GENERAL	SHIPS	TONS	VALUE OF FAIR	VALUE SOURCE
1550 (a)	1	Sancho de Viedma	39	8165	1,260,000p	?
1551 (b)	2	Sancho de Viedma	29	5435	-	-
1552 (c)	1	Bartolomé Carreño	32	7485	531,111p	?
1553 (d)	1	Cosme Rodríguez de Farfán	26	5405	1,088,120p	Almojarifazgo
1554	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1555 (e)	1	Alvaro Sánchez de Avilés	47	10520	1,055,960p	Almojarifazgo
1556 (f)	0	Pedro Menéndez de Avilés	13	-	-	-
1557 (g)	2	Martin de Avendaño	23	4820	756,760p	Almojarifazgo
		Pedro de las Roelas	11	3390	521,240p	Almojarifazgo
1558 (h)	0	Pedro de las Roelas	17	3610	-	-
1559 (i)	1	Conde de Niebla	15	3600	717,460p	Almojarifazgo
TOTALS	9		252	52930+	5,930,651p	

Notes

a. Cuentas de la Caja Real de Panamá, 1550, AGI Contaduría 1453; Chaunu 6-2, pp. 448-449.

b. Chaunu 6-2, pp. 462-473; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, "Relación de las armadas a Tierra-Firme," p. 69.

c. Chaunu 6-2, pp. 482-487; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 69.

d. Cuentas de la Caja Real de Panamá, 1553, AGI Contaduría 1453; Chaunu 6-2, p. 503; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 70.

Table 2-1 continued

- e. Cuentas de la Caja Real de Panamá, 1555, AGI Contaduría 1453; Chaunu 6-2, pp. 520-529.
- f. Chaunu 6-2, p. 538.
- g. Cuentas de la Caja Real de Panamá, 1557, AGI Contaduría 1453; Chaunu 6-2, pp. 548-557; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 71.
- h. Chaunu 6-2, pp. 562-565; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 71.
- i. Cuentas de la Caja Real de Panamá, 1559, AGI Contaduría 1453; Chaunu 6-2, pp. 576-581, 596.

Nombre de Dios. The first sailed in January and arrived at Nombre de Dios in April, the second, a much smaller collection, sailed in October. All told, 29 ships arrived that year, though the final count of vessels returning to Spain was only 10, some ships staying in the New World, others (including the Capitana) lost in storms off Bermuda.²⁸

1552 was a trying year in the history of the carrera. Sailing in August with Bartolomé Carreño as Captain General, the fleet underwent numerous hardships before arriving in Tierra Firme. First, one ship was captured off the Canaries by French corsairs, and then the fleet encountered a storm off Santo Domingo that removed four more ships from the convoy. Even so, once the remaining 32 ships arrived in Nombre de Dios a successful fair was celebrated, the merchandise being worth some 531,111 pesos.²⁹ The next year saw a large fleet under Cosme Rodríguez de Farfán consisting of 26 ships with a carrying capacity of 5405 tons. The principal threat to the flota was the large number of French corsairs active not only off Sevilla, but also near the Canaries and as far away as Havana. Although a very successful fair was celebrated that May--1,088,120 pesos worth of merchandise traded--the crown gained little from the exercise: as in the case of the previous year, a hurricane struck the flota on the return voyage, scattering ships in every direction, many ending up in Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo, but few in Sevilla.³⁰

No fleets arrived at Nombre de Dios in 1554 and 1555, the disasters of the past two years having taken a heavy toll not so much on the isthmian economy as on that of Seville. The next large fleet, one consisting of 21 ships arrived in Tierra Firme on January 23, 1556. Under the direction of Alvaro Sánchez de Avilés, the flota had actually sailed from Spain at the end of 1555, thus most sources, including Chaunu, report it as the fleet of 1555. The fair lasted until 26 April 1556, exchanging just over 1,000,000 pesos in³¹ merchandise. Another fleet arrived in Nombre de Dios in late 1556, this one led by the legendary Pedro Menéndez de³² Avilés with 13 ships, though no fair was celebrated.

During 1557 two fleets arrived at Nombre de Dios, making this the most active year to date. The first fleet left the bar at San Lúcar in early February under Martín de Avendaño. It consisted of 23 ships, 21 of which arrived in Tierra Firme in April. 756,760 pesos in merchandise was traded at the first fair of the year. Meanwhile, Pedro de las Roelas brought the second flota across the Atlantic in conjunction with the New Spain fleet. Composed of between 11 and 19 ship representing 3890 tons of shipping, this fleet was slightly smaller. This second flota arrived in Nombre de Dios in November, 521,240 pesos of goods eventually being traded. The total for the year, therefore was 8710 tons of shipping³³ and 1,278,000 pesos in goods traded.

The flotas of 1558 and 1559 were not as large as in previous years, each consisting of about 3,600 tons. The 1558 flota of Pedro de las Roelas had 17 ships, while the 1559 convoy of the Conde de Nueva, was made up of only 15. No data indicating value are available for the 1558 fair. The 1559 flota did not arrive in Nombre de Dios until spring of 1560, and the fair lasting from May until the end of October was valued at 717,460 pesos. Out of this fair came the first widespread reports of fraudulent dealings, an issue that would grow to one of paramount importance in years to come.³⁴

The decade of the 1560s was one of profound significance for the economy of Panama. The first half of the decade resembled the last years of the 1550s, although the level of the economy was elevated, carried on the general rise in the Atlantic economy of the late sixteenth century. During the period after 1565, the organization of the mature carrera de Indias, a system that would function for generations, was completed. Figures for the last half of the decade reflect this new, more systematic, approach to Indies commerce in Panama.

Between 1560 and 1564, six fairs were held in Nombre de Dios, two in 1560 (one of which is discussed above). The second of the 1560 flotas sailed under the command of Pedro Sáenz de Venesa and arrived in Nombre de Dios on May 4, 1560, at the height of the fair being conducted for the previous

Table 2-2

Flotas and Fairs of Tierra Firme, 1560-1569

YEAR	FAIRS	CAPTAIN GENERAL	SHIPS	TONS	VALUE OF FAIR	VALUE SOURCE
1560 (a)	2	Pedro Sáenz de Benesa	16	4320	-	-
1561 (b)	1	Bernardino de Andino	9	2300	-	-
1562 (c)	1	Bartolomé Menéndez de Avilés	25	6640	1,915,920p	Almojarifazgo
1563 (d)	1	Pedro de las Roelas	15	4150	688,480p	Almojarifazgo
1564 (e)	1	Nicolás de Cardona	16	4300	541,020p	Almojarifazgo
1565	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1566 (f)	1	Cristóbal de Eraso	37	10150	1,878,320p	Almojarifazgo
1567 (g)	1	Diego Flores de Valdéz	39	10750	1,340,140p	Almojarifazgo
1568	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1569 (h)	1	Diego Flores de Valdéz	40	11073	1,077,030	Almojarifazgo
TOTALS	9		200	53683	7,440,950+	

Notes

a. Ortega de Mendoza to Casa de Contratación, Nombre de Dios, 18 May 1560, AGI Contratación 5104; Chaunu 6-2, pp. 584-587; José Antonio de Lavalley, Galería de retratos de los gobernantes y virreyes, ii p. 526.

b. Chaunu 6-3, pp. 6-9.

c. Cuentas de la Caja Real de Panamá, 1562, AGI Contaduría 1453; Chaunu 6-3, pp. 22-31; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 70.

d. Cuentas de la Caja Real de Panamá, 1563, AGI Contaduría 1453; Chaunu 6-3, pp. 36-39; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, pp. 71-72.

Table 2-2 continued

- e. Cuentas de la Caja Real de Panamá, 1564, AGI Contaduría 1453; Estevan de los Altas to Casa de Contratación, 1564, AGI Contratación 5105; Chaunu 6-3, pp. 52-55; Rubén Vargas Ugarte, Historia del Perú (Virreynato 1551-90), p. 79.
- f. Chaunu 6-3, pp. 70-74; Levillier, iii p. 198.
- g. Cuentas de la Caja Real de Panamá, 1567, AGI Contaduría 1459; Chaunu 6-3, pp. 98-103.
- h. Cuentas de la Caja Real de Panamá, 1569, AGI Contaduría 1453; Chaunu 6-3, pp. 128-135; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, pp. 71-72.

fleet, making the 1560 combined fair one of the largest of the era. The second fleet was made up of 16 ships that had a capacity of 4320 tons.³⁵ The next year saw the arrival of a relatively small flota of nine ships under Bernardino de Andino.³⁶

Bartolomé Menéndez de Avilés brought out the next flota, again combined with the New Spain fleet for the transatlantic leg of the voyage. The combined fleet consisted of 49 ships--35 from Seville, 14 from Cádiz. Twenty-five of these ships arrived in Nombre de Dios in August after an uneventful crossing. Instructions from the Casa de Contratación to the Captain General called for the flota to stay on the isthmus for only 40 days--a first attempt at limiting the time of trading at the fair, and at the 40 day fair of 1562, nearly 2,000,000 pesos in merchandise was traded. It was a very good year after a very bad one--a theme that would repeat itself³⁷ over and over again.

Accordingly, the next fair was a disaster. The 1563 flota, commanded by carrera veteran Pedro de las Roelas, was originally to have sailed at the end of 1562, but was delayed by administrative complications. Twenty-eight ships finally crossed the bar at San Lúcar in March, 1563, 15 arriving in Nombre de Dios on 13 July. The total tonnage was 4150, of which 800 were controlled by merchants from Cádiz. Before arriving in Nombre de Dios, the flota unloaded much of its

cargo in Cartagena, thus depleting the quantity of goods bound for Peru. Once in Panama, however, what little merchandise that remained could not be exchanged because the silver from Peru had not arrived on the isthmus. Faced with the prospect of having no silver and little merchandise, Roelas decided to stay the winter in Nombre de Dios' unprotected anchorage. Eventually enough silver was brought up from the southern viceroyalty to exchange 688,480 pesos of merchandise, about one-third of that traded at the previous fair. On top of all this, before the fleet could sail to Havana a severe storm struck and destroyed much of the shipping in the harbor.³⁸

In contrast to 1563, 1564 stands out as a model fair year from the functioning standpoint, even though the total value of the goods traded was actually less than that of the poor year before. Under the direction of Nicolás de Cardona, the flota left Spain in October 1563, arriving in Nombre de Dios in summer after spending several months in Santa Marta and Cartagena. Sixteen ships representing 4,300 tons provided the carriage for half a million pesos worth of cargo. Reports from the fair indicate that every bit of merchandise was traded without difficulty. Again the pattern of bad year followed by good year was repeated. The single dominant theme of 1564, aside from the commercial success of the isthmian undertaking, was fear of John Hawkins--Tudor England by now

having replaced Valois France as the greatest threat to
³⁹
 Hapsburg hegemony.

The success of 1564 was followed by near disaster in 1565. The fleet of Cristóbal de Eraso was forced to return to Cádiz after a storm drove his ships far into the Mediterranean where they were ravaged by Turkish corsairs. Cádiz was used as the primary harbor for the carrera this year because the Guadalquivir was full of shipping bound for the expedition against the Huguenots in Florida. The original carrera sailing had taken place in October, but the fleet did not finally set out across the Atlantic until 2 December, arriving in Nombre de Dios with 37 ships in February, 1566. The fair that year lasted until 15 May. Twenty-eight ships paid almojarifazgo taxes totaling 93,916 pesos, meaning the fair had a total value of at least 1,878,320 pesos. The 1566 fair was far larger than that of the previous years, again responding to the increase in
⁴⁰
 imperial economic strength under Philip II.

No fleet was sent out in 1566, partly because the 1565 flota was still in American waters. By 1567, however, a substantial supply of merchandise--enough to fill 39 ships--had collected on the Sevillian docks. The 1567 flota sailed in April under Diego Flores de Valdez. The voyage was uneventful, and the fair at Nombre de Dios a complete success
⁴¹
 with over 1,340,140 pesos in goods traded. The next year again saw a suspension of trade, making for a larger

contingent of ships in 1569. Indeed, the 1569 fleet (again led out by Valdez) consisted of over 11,000 tons in 40 ships, though many of them formed part of the military escort of Francisco de Toledo, this convoy's most famous passenger. Goods worth 1,077,030 pesos were transferred at the fair.⁴²

Overall Indies commerce suffered a slight decline in the 1570s, a trend subtly reflected in statistics of the Tierra Firme outbound route. Even if a dramatic reversal in the upward trend is not apparent, the steady growth characteristic of the earlier decades was replaced by a leveling off after 1574. Seven fairs were conducted in Nombre de Dios in the 1570s, two of which occurred in 1578, thus leaving four open years.

Valdez commanded the fleet of 1570, his third transatlantic trip back to back. The sailing occurred so late in the year that the flota did not arrive in Panama until January, 1571.⁴³ It remained in Nombre de Dios until May. The value of the goods carried on the 26 ships that came to this fair was 1,524,440 pesos.⁴⁴ During the first half of 1572, a fleet of 7 galleons was sent under Estevan de las Altas to collect the silver accumulated in Panama, an indication that a substantial trade imbalance existed in the commercial relationship between Spain and the southern viceroyalty. More silver was being produced than was needed to pay for the maintenance of a supply of Spanish goods in

Table 2-3
Flotas and Fairs of Tierra Firme, 1570-1579

YEAR	FAIRS	CAPTAIN GENERAL	SHIPS	TONS	VALUE OF FAIR	VALUE SOURCE
1570 (a)	1	Diego Flores de Valdéz	26	8230	1,524,440p	Almojarifazgo
1571	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1572 (b)	1	Estevan de las Altas	7	3500	-	-
		Diego Flores de Valdéz	36	10978	-	-
1573	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1574 (c)	1	Alonso Manrique de Lara	27	10008	-	-
1575 (d)	0	Alvaro de Flores	4	2100	0	-
1576 (e)	1	Francisco de Luxán	19	6900	-	-
		Cristóbal de Erasco	10	3400	0	-
1577	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1578 (f)	2	Juan de Velasco de Barrio	16	5580	-	-
		Cristóbal de Erasco	14	3830	-	-
1579 (g)	1	Antonio Navarro de Prado	19	6380	-	-
TOTAL	8		178	60906		

Notes

- a. Chaunu 6-3, pp. 140-149.
- b. Chaunu 6-3, pp. 166-177.
- c. Chaunu 6-3, pp. 194-199.
- d. Chaunu 6-3, pp. 210-211.

Table 2-3 continued

- e. Francisco de Luxán to Casa de Contratación, Nombre de Dios, 23 June 1576, AGI Contratación 5101; Chaunu 6-3, pp. 220-224.
- f. Juan Velasco de Barrio to Casa de Contratación, Nombre de Dios, 25 February 1578, AGI Contratación 5101; Chaunu 6-3, pp. 238-239, 250-251; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 71.
- g. Chaunu 6-3, pp. 262-263, 288.

the southern viceroyalty. The fleet of Las Altas, an "Armada de la Guardia de la Carrera de Indias," officially carried no merchandise. A second fleet, the flota proper, consisting of 36 ships was sent out under Valdéz. Little information,⁴⁵ however, exists regarding the fair of that year.

No fleet sailed to Tierra Firme in 1573. In 1574, however, the double fleet scenario of 1572 repeated itself: early in the year an armada of four galleons under Valdéz arrived to remove surplus silver and was back in Spain by the end of the year while the regular "Armada y Flota de Tierra Firme"⁴⁶ sailed several months later. This fleet, commanded by Alonso Manrique de Lara, had been in preparation for two years, but had been unable to meet the sailing deadline imposed by the hurricane season. No information is available as to the success of the fair, but since commercial activity had been limited the year before, it is probable that the cargos of all 20 ships sold well.⁴⁷ In 1575 an armada of galleons to collect accumulated silver again arrived in Nombre de Dios, this time under Alvaro de Flores. Because Sevillian merchants were beginning to worry about the apparent economic slowdown, no commercial flota was sent later in the year.⁴⁸

Two fleets arrived in 1576, but as in the case of 1574 only one fair was celebrated. This year the flota arrived before the smaller Armada de la Guardia sent to collect the royal silver. Francisco de Luxán commanded the flota, all 19

ships arriving in Nombre de Dios on 28 May 1576. Although the fleet brought back 200,000 pesos in royal bullion--in addition to that brought back later in the year by the Armada de la Guardia--commercial activity at the fair was slow. Luxán wrote in a letter to the Casa de Contratación that prices were markedly depressed owing to the surplus of Spanish goods in the Peruvian markets. Later in the year, in mid July, the armada of 10 galleons sent to bring back the excess silver arrived under Cristóbal de Erasco.⁴⁹ The implication of these second treasure-only fleets that characterized the 1570s was not that Peru was incapable of purchasing Spanish goods at previous levels for financial reasons--silver seemed abundant. Instead, the large fleets of the late 1560s and early 1570s had simply caused a situation of over supply in Peru.

The fleet of 1577 sailed from Seville in mid October under the direction of Capitán General Juan de Velasco de Barrio. His 16 ships arrived in Nombre de Dios in January 1578, thus making 1577 another year without a fair. The fleet faced threats from French and English corsairs once in American waters, and the vitality of the commercial system itself was thwarted by Portuguese merchants who had infiltrated the carrera. The fair suffered the same fate as others of the decade: the saturation of the Peruvian market made selling goods difficult. As one 1577 writer reported,

"esta tierra es tan ruin que no hay quien no desa salir della, la ropa se ha vendido a 68, dos tercios de contado y 65...los vinos no tienen ningun valor, esperase un nao de Quito y del Piru, por oras; con su venida, dizen que se vendera todo."⁵⁰

Cristóbal de Eraso brought the next flota out, leaving San Lúcar in July to arrive in Nombre de Dios on 28 September. The fleet remained on the isthmus until 24 June 1579, making mockery of the 40 day limit. The flota consisted of 14 ships, and because a fair had been celebrated only a few months before, trading was very slow. Storms plagued the return voyage, but no ships were lost. Some time after the departure of the Eraso flota, six small coastal vessels (80 tons each) arrived to patrol the Tierra Firme coast against northern European attacks.⁵¹

The last flota and fair of the decade was celebrated under the eyes of Antonio Navarro de Prado. Prado's 19 ships sailed from Spain in April, arriving in Nombre de Dios at the end of June, 1579. Chaunu describes the economic activity of 1579 as "a difficult year in a down cycle." Bank failures in Sevilla--victims of Philip II's policy of overspending and debt repudiation--did not help the financial foundation of the carrera, robbing it of needed capital on the European end. Even though 1579 was a "down year," crown treasure returned to Seville amounted to 790,909 pesos, while private remittances totaled 875,969.⁵²

The Mature Carrera, 1580-1646

There were significant upward and downward swings in the decade of the 1580s, but on the whole the Panamanian economy returned to a trend characterized by steady rise: the recession of the 1570s was over. Only toward the end of the decade did shipping fall off slightly, and that resulted more from European military adventures than commercial collapse. The first year, 1580, saw the arrival of two fleets, the first under the man who knew the Tierra Firme run best, Diego Flores de Valdéz. This armada carried no merchandise, the four ships sent to bring to Spain the accumulation of crown silver. Several months later a fleet of merchant ships under the command of Antonio Manrique arrived in Nombre de Dios. Leading his fleet of 15 ships was the Espíritu Santo, at 1088 tons the largest ship ever to call in Nombre de Dios during the colonial era. The fair--held in the spring of 1581--functioned poorly because of repeated delays in transporting the silver from Peru. Because of the delays of the Peruvian merchants, the Manrique flota remained in Nombre de Dios several months.

Because the 1580-81 fleet was so slow in returning to Spain, no flota was sent in 1581 proper, setting the stage for a massive fair in 1582. Diego Maldonado was appointed Capitán General of the 27 ship 1582 fleet. The flota arrived

Table 2-4
Flotas and Fairs of Tierra Firme, 1580-1589

YEAR	FAIRS	CAPTAIN GENERAL	SHIPS	TONS	VALUE OF FAIR	VALUE SOURCE
1580 (a)	1	Diego Flores de Valdéz	4	940	0	-
1581	0	Antonio Manrique	15	6441	-	-
1582 (b)	1	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1583	0	Diego Maldono	27	8600	-	-
1584 (c)	1	-	3	-	-	-
1585 (d)	1	Francisco de Novoa Feijo	21	6627	900,000p	?
1586	0	Antonio de Osorio	31	9010	-	-
1587 (e)	1	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
		Alvaro Flores de Quiñones	64	19957	-	-
1588 (f)	0	Miguel de Eraso y Aguilar	8	800	0	-
1589 (g)	1	Alvaro Flores de Quiñones	69	15565	-	-
		Diego de la Rivera			-	-
TOTALS	6		242	67940		

Notes

- a. Chaunu 6-3, pp. 276-280, 304.
 b. Chaunu 6-3, pp. 306-318, 336.
 c. Chaunu 6-3, pp. 340-46; Historia marítima militar de España, i p. 482.

Table 2-4 continued

- d. Chaunu 6-3, pp. 344-349; C. H. Haring, Trade and Navigation p. 212; Relación histórica y geográfica de América Central, p. 174.
- e. Chaunu 6-3, pp. 378-379, 382-387; Haring, p. 212; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 73.
- f. Chaunu 6-3, pp. 412-413.
- g. Chaunu 6-3, pp. 428-431; Haring, p. 212; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 73; Relación histórica y geográfica de América Central, p. 174.

in Nombre de Dios on 24 July, four months after leaving Seville. The fair was a resounding success--the first in many years--with 2,964,560 pesos in merchandise exchanged, a record that would remain unbroken during the colonial era. Chaunu reports the registered cargo at Seville to be 6,000,000 pesos, a figure contradicting the value based on almojarifazgo accounts. Either figure, however, supports that the fair was a success.⁵⁴ One characteristic of this fair, and of others of the decade, was an abundance of silver combined with a need for Spanish goods in Peru. No longer were Armadas de la Guardia frequently sent out only to bring back silver, and suddenly the Peruvian market could absorb more Spanish goods. Economic activity on the isthmus grew in proportion to the expanding economy. Indeed, the principal factor in the success of these fairs was the maintenance of a permanent high demand for Spanish goods in Peru, an end accomplished by not only limiting the amount of cargo shipped to Tierra Firme, but also by attempting to organize fairs for every other year rather than every year. To be sure, one of the main themes of the mature monopoly system was the deliberate perpetuation of a merchandise shortage in South America.

No fleet was dispatched in 1583, though three galleons were sent by the crown to bring back the public portion of the Peruvian treasure, an action demonstrating imperial finances as a contrasting interest to that of the profit-

minded merchants. The suspension of the flota in 1583 created the desired economic situation. Indeed, prices in Panama were so high that the consulado insisted not only on a large flota of merchant ships, but also on a second one later in the year so as to capitalize on the economic moment. This, of course, was at the risk of market saturation, but the desire for profit proved too powerful. The first fleet of the year sailed in January under Francisco de Novoa Feijo, the commander himself symbolizing the level of Portuguese infiltration into the carrera. This flota, consisting of 21 ships, arrived in Nombre de Dios in mid March. At the fair prices were high and silver abundant; the crown's profit alone stood at over 900,000 pesos.⁵⁵ The second fleet sailed at the end of November 1584, arriving in Nombre de Dios in March 1585. Moreyra y Paz-Soldán and Haring report that the flota, sailing under Antonio de Osorio, consisted of 71 ships, though Chaunu puts the number at 31. As in the case of the fair of 1584, trading was robust, though the saturation point was again coming within sight.⁵⁶

The danger of saturation dominated the minds of the fickle fiadores who underwrote much of the commerce with America. Accordingly, 1585 saw no fleets or fairs. Two flotas, however, were sent in 1586, one in April and one in October. After a lengthy stay in Cartagena, they both arrived together in Nombre de Dios in February of the

following year. The first fleet was a squadron of 15 warships under the command of Alvaro Flores de Quiñones, the second a merchant flota under Miguel de Eraso y Aguilar. Aguilar's flota was one of the largest on record. Chaunu reports the number of ships as 49 (13,667 tons), which added to the 6290 tons in the 15 ships in the de Quiñones armada, renders a total of 64 ships with a carrying capacity of almost 17,000 tons. Because of the careful manipulation of the supply of Spanish goods to Peru, the fair was a grand success.⁵⁷

In more ways than one 1588 was an off year for Spanish shipping. An armada under the command of Quiñones had been under preparation to sail to Tierra Firme since late 1587, but was suddenly sequestered and incorporated into the ill-fated armada against England. In lieu of a full scale fleet to Panama, the crown sent a small flotilla of 8 small ships (800 tons) to carry back the desperately needed silver.⁵⁸ Officially, no merchandise was traded that year.

The usurpation of the 1588 flota created ideal conditions for a successful fair in 1589. The Sevilla consulado was able to put together a massive fleet of 69 ships despite the shipping crisis that ensued in the wake of the disastrous defeat in the English Channel the year before. The flota, commanded by Diego de la Rivera, included 1150 tons of shipping from Cádiz. The fair went off with no incidents in

late May, though no figures have been uncovered to shed light
on specific economic trends.⁵⁹

The 1590s was a decade of timid growth in the Panamanian economy based on the regular cycles of imperial trade. Total commerce dropped from the levels attained in the 1580s, but the leveling off represented more of a plateau than a significant drop. Fairs were celebrated every other year as the consulados in Seville and Lima carefully cultivated their captive consumers. High prices meant great profits at both ends of the carrera wholesale network.

The 1590s got off to an inauspicious start with the fleet of Juan de Uribe Apallua. The flota consisted of only 12 ships--the effects of 1588 finally hitting, and hitting hard in Panama. Moreover, five ships were lost to storms during the Atlantic crossing. What with these difficulties, no fair of any consequence was held. The next year was even worse with only four small ships sailing to collect the crown
⁶⁰revenue. In 1592, however, Francisco de Martínez de Leiva successfully brought a flota of 42 ships to Nombre de Dios. Since no full-scale fairs had been conducted since 1589, the 1592 event was one of significant commercial activity, though again no documents have been found that contain fiscal data on the actual trading. Later in the year a small armada of seven frigates entered Nombre de Dios to bring back
⁶¹additional crown bullion.

Table 2-5
Flotas and Fairs of Tierra Firme, 1590-1599

YEAR	FAIRS	CAPTAIN GENERAL	SHIPS	TONS	VALUE OF FAIR	VALUE SOURCE
1590 (a)	1	Juan de Uribe Apallua	12	4700	-	-
1591 (b)	0	-	4	460	0	-
1592 (c)	1	Francisco de Martínez de Leiva	42	9610	-	-
		Luis Alfonso de Flores	7	520	0	-
1593	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1594 (d)	1	Sancho Pardo Osorio	33	12442	1,899,230p	Almojarifazgo
1595	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1596 (e)	1	Francisco Eraso	37	7905	-	-
1597	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1598 (f)	1	Sancho Pardo Osorio	30	11287	1,596,910p	Almojarifazgo
1599 (g)	1	Francisco Coloma	21	5340	1,604,770p	?
TOTALS	6		186	52,264		

Notes

a. Chaunu 6-3, pp. 450-451.

b. Chaunu 6-3, pp. 468-469.

c. Chaunu 6-3, pp. 488-493; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 73.

Table 2-5 continued

- d. Chaunu 6-3, pp 526-529; Enriqueta Vila Vilar, "Las ferias de Portobelo," p. 49; Haring, p. 212; Rodrigo de Sota to the crown, 19 May 1594, AGI Contratación 5189.
- e. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 8-10; Relación histórica y geográfica de América Central, p. 174; letter of Avellaneda to Juan de Ibarra, 9 May 1596, AGI Contratación 5189.
- f. Vila Vilar, p. 51; Chaunu 6-4, pp. 50-55; Casa de Contratación to crown, 28 May 1597, AGI Contratación 5170.
- g. Cuentas de la Caja Real de Panamá, 1599, AGI Contaduría 1470; Chaunu 6-4 74-87; Jaime Vicens Vives, An Economic History of Spain, p. 401.

The 1592 fleets represent a return to the smooth functioning of the system that had evolved in the years leading up to before 1588. Accordingly, no fleet was sent in 1593 so as to cultivate the Peruvian markets. A new and growing problem presented itself in the early years of the decade, that being the steady drain of wealth to Asia that resulted from direct trading between American Pacific ports--⁶² including Panama--and the orient. Just as 1593 was an "off year," 1594 was one of heightened commercial activity. A fleet under Sancho Pardo Osorio numbering 33 ships arrived in Nombre de Dios in May carrying goods valued at 1,899,230 pesos. One merchant alone, Juan de Zavaleta, paid over 17,000 pesos in almojarifazgo taxes, 16 others paying 49,130⁶³ more.

No ships arrived in 1595, setting the stage for a large fair in 1596 which was held in April and May. The fleet sailed under the command of Francisco Eraso and consisted of 37 ships. The transportation of the crown silver from Tierra Firme in 1595 took on added importance when the New Spain fleet was destroyed in Cádiz harbor by an English fleet. The English were active in the New World as well that year: Eraso himself saw the destructive aftermath of an English attack on Panama led by Drake in 1595. The role of the 1596 fleet in restoring order on the isthmus was critical. Things were in such disorder in Nombre de Dios that the move to the newly

Table 2-6
 Merchants At the Portobelo Fair, 1594

Merchant	Almojarifazgo Paid	Value of Merchandise at Fair
Juan Zavaleta	17,569	170,569
C. Melcho Suárez	9,887	98,870
Juan de la Fuente Almonte	6,981	69,810
Sebastián de la Puebla	4,250	42,500
Gerónimo Castellano de Espinosa	3,841	38,410
Esteban Tenorio	3,460	34,460
Rodrigo de Medina	3,249	32,490
Diego López Marmoleio	2,770	27,700
Augustín Martínez	2,725	27,250
Juan de Espinosa	1,970	19,700
C. Pedro Martínez Serrano	1,930	19,300
Mateo de Rivera	1,692	16,920
Alonso López de Villar	1,602	16,020
Antonio de Charrión	1,517	15,170
Domingo de Barra	1,289	12,890
Antonio de Almandras	1,251	12,510
Gregorio de Polanco	1,163	11,630
Total (29 percent of fair total)	66,606	666,060

Note: values are in pesos ensayados.

Source: Enriqueta Vila Vilar, "Las ferias de Portobelo: apariencia y realidad del comercio con Indias," Revista Lotería 358 (1986) p. 49.

built Portobelo was postponed until after the 1596 fair. Once Eraso's fleet sailed from the isthmus, however, Nombre de Dios was abandoned; no Spanish fleet ever anchored there again.
64

The two-year cycle continued during 1597-1598, the first year seeing no arrivals in Tierra Firme at all, the second hosting a large fleet of 30 ships. The 1598 fleet was commanded by the future governor of Cuba, Sancho Pardo Osorio, himself a veteran of the Tierra Firme run. The fair began shortly after the arrival of the fleet at shiny new Portobelo on 10 March. The adherence to a two year cycle was, in this case, purely accidental. The fleet was to have sailed in August 1597, but it was delayed by both administrative disorder and the menacing presence of an English fleet off the coast of southwestern Spain. At any rate, the value of the goods exchanged was 1,596,910 pesos.
65
Portobelo's first fair was a good one.

The fair of 1598 was successful because the Peruvian market was still in a state of shortage at a time during which silver still abounded--a delicate balance that could easily be upset. Accordingly, when it became known that a fleet was to sail for a 1599 fair without an intervening year to prepare the market, many merchants protested the decision. Crying foul, some even refused to load merchandise, hoping to maintain an economic situation conducive to a fantastically profitable fair in 1600. Even so, more than enough merchants

were willing to ship goods in 1599 to fill a fleet of 21 ships. The flota made an uneventful crossing and arrived in Portobelo in April. The fair was conducted under the stewardship of Capitán General Francisco Coloma with 1,604,770 pesos in merchandise being exchanged. The market⁶⁶ still held.

The dawn of the new century saw large growth in trade along the Sevilla-Vera Cruz route, but only moderate increases in commerce with Tierra Firme. Indeed, as Chaunu has pointed out, the highpoint of the imperial economy reached between 1600 and 1620 was not achieved because of expanded trade to Tierra Firme. No great depression struck, however, and in fact economic indicators show a moderate rise. To be sure, the Tierra Firme leg of the carrera only looks bad if it is held up too closely in comparison with the great expansion in commerce with New Spain. In all, four fairs were held during the decade, generally keeping to the every other year schedule developed in the last two decades of the sixteenth century.

The year 1600 did not host the celebration of a fair at Portobelo, though the fleet of 7 galleons sent to collect the silver under Marcos de Aramburu did carry small amounts of⁶⁷ merchandise and a number of slaves. The first fair of the new century occurred in grand style in 1601. Commanded by Francisco de Corral y Toledo, the fleet was by far the

Table 2-7
Flotas and Fairs of Tierra Firme, 1600-1609

YEAR	FAIRS	CAPTAIN GENERAL	SHIPS	TONS	VALUE OF FAIR	VALUE SOURCE
1600 (a)	0	Marcos de Aramburu	7	3650	0	-
1601 (b)	1	Francisco de Corral y Toledo	49	12867	1,664,050p	Almojarifazgo
1602 (c)	0	Luis de Córdoba	8	3290	0	-
1603 (d)	1	Gerónimo de Torres y Portugal	26	12234	1,492,170p	Almojarifazgo
1604 (e)	0	Luis Fernández de Córdoba	9	3387	0	-
1605 (f)	1	Luis de Silva	23	9107	2,033,500p	Almojarifazgo
1606 (g)	0	Gerónimo de Torres y Portugal	12	5080	0	-
1607 (h)	0	Francisco de Corral y Toledo	11	5604	0	-
1608 (i)	1	Gerónimo de Torres y Portugal	30	9080	1,257,610p	Almojarifazgo
1609 (j)	0	Gerónimo de Torres y Portugal	12	6154	0	-
TOTALS	4		187	70453	6,447,330p	

Notes

- a. Chaunu 6-4, p. 98.
 b. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 112-117; Vila Vilar p. 51; Relación histórica y geográfica de América Central, p. 174.
 c. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 134-135.

Table 2-7 continued

- d. Chaunu 6-4, p. 158; Vila Vilar, p. 51; Pedro de Castillo to Casa de Contratación, 5 March 1603, AGI Contratación 5113; Pedro de Castillo to Casa de Contratación, 23 March 1603, AGI Contratación 5113.
- e. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 170-171; Cuentas de la Caja Real de Panamá, 1604, AGI Contaduría 1505.
- f. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 184-185; Vila Vilar, p. 51; Declaration of Cargo, Casa de Contratación, 5 January 1605, AGI Contratación 2800 lib. II.
- g. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 204-205; Haring, p. 213.
- h. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 228-229, 232-233; Cuentas de la Caja Real de Panamá, 1607, AGI Contaduría 1473.
- i. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 240-251; Vila Vilar, p. 51; John Lynch, ii p. 187; Cuentas de la Caja Real de Panamá, 1608, AGI Contaduría 1474.
- j. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 278-279, 288; Report of Don Lope Díaz de Armendariz, 1609, AGI Contratación 2899; Francisco Duarte to Duque de Medina Sidonia, 3 March 1609, AGI Indiferente General 2662; Alonso Soletto to Casa de Contratación, 4 June 1609, AGI Indiferente General 2663.

Table 2-8
 Merchants At the Portobelo Fair, 1601

Merchant	Almojarifazgo Paid	Value of Merchandise at Fair
Pedro Pablo Minucho	7,800	78,800
Antonio de Rocas	5,196	51,960
Martín de la Torre	5,015	50,150
Diego de Felipe	4,964	49,640
Lope de Murube	4,821	48,210
Pedro Martín Moreno	4,001	40,010
Xil Rubiano	2,422	24,220
Juan Gómez de Zuñiga	2,245	22,450
Pedro Espinosa de Vergara	2,147	21,470
Dr. Tamayo	1,990	19,900
Antonio Ximénez	1,635	16,350
Juan de la Fuente Almonte	1,619	16,190
Gerónimo de Guadalupe	1,304	13,040
Francisco Ortiz de Parras	1,284	12,840
Juan de Salcedo Reynalde	1,217	12,170
Francisco Gallo de la Calzada	1,062	10,620
Total (29 percent of fair total)	48,722	487,220

Note: Values are in pesos ensayados

Source: Enriqueta Vila Vilar, "Las ferias de Portobelo: apariencia y realidad del comercio con Indias," Revista Lotería 358 (1986) p. 49.

largest of the decade at 49 ships with a carrying capacity of 12,867 tons. At the July fair, 1,664,050 pesos of merchandise were exchanged, with perhaps as much as 75 percent more traded in unregistered goods. Sixteen merchants traded 30 percent of the goods, Pedro Pablo Minucho paying the the highest almojarifazgo tax amount at 7,800 pesos.⁶⁸

The successful fair of 1601, celebrated just after the attack on Portobelo led by William Parker, was followed by an off year which saw the arrival of an Armada de la Guardia under Don Luis de Córdoba to collect the crown treasure. The fleet consisted of eight ships, six of which were galleons, with a total tonnage of 3290.⁶⁹

Gerónimo de Torres y Portugal commanded the 26 ships of the 1603 flota that arrived in Portobelo on 7 June. Registered goods were traded in the amount of 1,492,170 pesos, though emphasis must be placed on the word "registered." Fraud had been a significant problem at the isthmian fairs since their inception in the middle sixteenth century, but if frequent in the sixteenth century, illicit activity knew no bounds in the seventeenth. At the 1603 fair, however, the boldness of the illegal traders was particularly noteworthy: they managed to ship an entire cargo of unregistered goods from Panama to Peru and then send the same vessel back to carry a second load of legitimate merchandise. Of course, by the time the registered goods⁷⁰ arrived, the market had been destroyed.

The two year cycle again prevailed in 1604-1605, the fleet of 1604 (Don Luis Fernández de Córdoba) being a collection of galleons sent to bring back crown treasure rather than to conduct commerce. The 1605 fair was uneventful, though successful. Twenty-three ships under Luis de Silva arrived from Spain that year, making port in Portobelo on 29 August. The fair was a good one with 2,033,500 pesos in registered goods traded (perhaps a million more in unregistered cargo); it was the largest of the decade.⁷¹

The next trading cycle lasted three years instead of the usual two. No fairs were celebrated in 1606 and 1607, setting the stage for a successful fair in 1608. Two substantial Armadas de la Guardia were sent out in 1606-1607 to bring back royal silver, both probably carrying unregistered merchandise to Tierra Firme. Indeed, it was such illicit traffic (which the Sevilla consulado could not control) that made the sending of Armadas de la Guardia so objectionable to the city's merchants. At any rate, the first fleet was headed by Gerónimo de Portugal y Córdoba, the second by Francisco del Corral y Toledo. Both fleets brought word back to Seville that conditions in Panama were not right for a fair; the huge flota of 1605 had resulted in the saturation of the Peruvian market. One has to wonder what role these fleets themselves played in bringing about this condition. Regardless of probable illicit commerce, such

complaints in a time of relatively infrequent flotas are clear indications that the economic expansion underway in New Spain was not shared by the southern viceroyalty.⁷² The 1608 fair was presided over by Portugal y Córdoba, who had made the Atlantic crossing with 30 ships. Goods exchanged were valued at 1,257,610 pesos, but again Vila Vilar sets the rate of fraud at 75 percent. The great events of 1608 were not the Tierra Firme fairs, however, but rather the massive fleet sent to New Spain. It was so large that 1608 represents the highpoint of volume in the Atlantic economy during the Hapsburg era. Total shipping for the year exceeded 50,000 tons,⁷³ of which Tierra Firme only received a fifth.

No fair was held in 1609, the fleet of 12 galleons that arrived under the command of Portugal y Córdoba being an Armada de la Guarda. The fleet brought 106 passengers to Panama, and temporarily lodged almost 2,000 soldiers in Portobelo during April. Extensive fraud in the form of transporting unregistered silver was the main theme of the year's activity.⁷⁴

The familiar pattern of two year cycles continued during the first half of the decade 1610-1619, but this important means of regulating the supply of goods fell by the wayside after 1616 when fairs began to occur every year. Rather than a sign of stability in the transatlantic economy, this development resulted from economic crisis both in Spain and in Peru. Panama, however, was not a loser in this formula.

Indeed, expanded commercial activity on the isthmus, no matter what the implications for the peninsula or for Peru, meant additional short term profits to persons involved in the trajín industry.

The first flota of the decade arrived in Portobelo on 17 April 1610 under the command of Juan de la Cueva y Mendoza. Twenty-seven ships carried the products of Spain to the New World, goods that were exchanged for 1,984,380 pesos of Peruvian goods and silver. Even though a large amount of merchandise was transferred, the fair of 1610 was far short of a success. Prices were too low to cover the costs incurred by Spanish merchants, and the resulting bargains available to Peruvian buyers simply led to still further saturation of the market. One contemporary observer discussed the structural problems that afflicted the fair that year. The greatest problem was seen to be the tradition of carrying massive amounts of merchandise on the capitana and almirantes of the escort squadrons. Such merchandise entered the fair tax free, and since officials who were charged with administering the conduct of the fairs--including setting prices--usually had an investment in these shipments, they were in an excellent position to out maneuver other merchants. Portuguese slave traders posed a second, equally destructive problem by carrying contraband cargos on their slave ships. Spanish merchants, ever careful to maintain an economic advantage through the maintenance of artificial

Table 2--9

Flotas and Fairs of Tierra Firme, 1610-1619

YEAR	FAIRS	CAPTAIN GENERAL	SHIPS	TONS	VALUE OF FAIR	VALUE SOURCE
1610 (a)	1	Juan de la Cueva y Mendoza	27	12160	1,984,380p	Almojarifazgo
1611 (b)	0	Gerónimo de Portugal y Córdoba	10	3400	0	-
1612 (c)	1	Juan de la Cueva y Mendoza	24	9780	708,370p	Almojarifazgo
1613 (d)	0	Gerónimo de Portugal y Córdoba	7	3220	0	-
1614 (e)	1	Lope Díaz de Armendariz	14	5300	840,680p	Almojarifazgo
1615 (f)	0	Lope Díaz de Armendariz	9	3630	0	-
1616 (g)	1	Diego de Santurze Orozco	23	8810	500,000p	Almojarifazgo
1617 (h)	1	Francisco Varnegas	19	7160	913,330p	Almojarifazgo
1618 (i)	1	Marqués de Cadereyta	23	7810	617,850p	Almojarifazgo
1619 (j)	1	Marqués de Cadereyta	13	5590	317,800p	Almojarifazgo
TOTALS	7		169	66870	276,986p	Avería
					5,936,500p	

Notes

a. Chaunu 6-4, p. 314; Vila Vilar, p. 51; Haring, p. 14; Antonio López de Catalayud to duque de Medina Sidoma, 3 July 1610, AGI Indiferente General 2663; Don Juan de la Cueva y Mendoza to the crown, Cartagena, 15 April 1610, AGI Contratación 5113.

b. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 338-339; Gerónimo de Portugal y Córdoba to Casa de Contratación, 4 October 1611, AGI Contratación 5113.

Table 2-9 continued

- c. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 372; Vila Vilar, p. 51.
- d. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 386-387, 394-397; Simón López to Casa de Contratación, 28 March 1613, AGI Contratación 5114.
- e. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 410-416; Earl J. Hamilton, American Treasure and the Price Revolution in Spain, p. 24.
- f. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 432-33, 440.
- g. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 436-437, 443; Vila Vilar, p. 51; Casa de Contratación to Pedro de Ledesma, 19 April 1614, AGI Contratación 5188.
- h. Vila Vilar, p. 51; Casa de Contratación to Consejo, 13 April 1617, AGI Contratación 5172.
- i. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 500-501; Vila Vilar, p. 51; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 73; Marqués de Cadereyta to Casa de Contratación, 24 November 1618, AGI Contratación 5115; Casa de Contratación to Don Francisco de Tejada, 30 April 1618, AGI Contratación 5116.
- j. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 526-527, 555; Vila Vilar, p. 51; Marqués de Cadereyta to Casa de Contratación, 10 November 1619, AGI Contratación 5115.

shortages in the American periphery, strongly protested such contraband activity as disruptive of the imposed balance of trade. This, together with an economic slowdown in the Peruvian economy, led to the continued saturation of the Peruvian market. Finally, trade between New Spain and Peru was seen to sap needed capital from the carrera. All of these problems continued to plague the fairs on the isthmus
75
for years to come.

The Armada de la Guardia of 1611 sailed under the direction of Portugal y Córdoba, arriving in Panama in early summer. The fleet consisted of ten ships, five of which were galleons. Though no fair was held, merchandise was exchanged in limited quantities, no doubt undermining the fair of the next year. The activity on the isthmus was plagued by the late arrival of silver from Peru, a symptom of the mercury
76
shortage that prevailed during this period. In 1612 the flota of Cueva y Mendoza was sent despite protests from the Seville consulado to suspend activity for one year to cultivate the Peruvian market. Twenty-four ships made the crossing, 15 of which were merchant ships. The outbound voyage saw a 20 day delay off Trinidad owing to the presence of corsairs in the Windward Islands. Concerns about the state of the Peruvian market expressed by the consulado were born out in the disappointing trading at the fair. Only 708,370 pesos in merchandize were exchanged, less than half
77
that of an average fair of the decade before.

The down phase of the repeating two year cycle took place in 1613 when Portugal y Córdoba brought a fleet of seven galleons from Sevilla. In addition to bringing back the royal silver, this fleet brought out 300 tons of merchandise for exchange in Tierra Firme, hardly an extensive undertaking, but indicative of the mismanagement of the carrera characteristic during these years. After all, silver was abundant. Proper cultivation of the market in Peru might have resulted in stronger showings on the isthmus. In 1613 Buenos Aires for the first time was seen as a threat to the Panama route. In a proposal made to the Casa de Contratación by Francisco de Calatayud for the restoration of the vitality of the isthmian fairs, the depopulation of Buenos Aires was the principal action advocated. Not only was Buenos Aires seen as a primary hole in the imperial mercantile arrangement, but so too were the Canaries and the Philippines. According to Calatayud, trade between America and these regions had to be curtailed before any restoration of prosperity to the carrera was possible. His proposal also called for the exclusion of Portuguese merchants from Spanish enterprises and, finally, a "return" to yearly fairs on the isthmus. While most of Calatayud's proposals probably would have improved conditions in the carrera--at the expense of the prosperity of the periphery--the restoration of yearly fairs was most certainly a bad idea. Calatayud, like so many

others of his day, was observing the first obvious signs of Spanish imperial decline. More than one Spanish official longed for the "good old days" of the sixteenth century, but it must be pointed out that the years of greatest success for the Peruvian leg of the carrera was not when fairs were held every year--that, indeed, had produced oversupply and disaster. A far better course of action would have been to tighten the system, thus giving merchants more control over the flow of goods into the southern viceroyalty. Needless to say, rather than acting on Calatayud's good proposals, the crown began to move towards a policy of yearly fairs, thus condemning the monopoly system to more years of difficulty.⁷⁸

Fifteen ships made up the 1614 fleet of Lope Díaz de Armendariz, but the cargo carried by merchants was again supplemented by 200 tons of merchandise carried on the galleons. Vila Vilar has estimated general fraud at the same rate as in 1608, 1610, and 1612: at least 75 percent more merchandise was traded than reported. The official value of the fair was 840,680, though a figure of about 2,000,000 is more realistic. The fair was uneventful, but not a complete failure.⁷⁹

There is little to say about the Armada de la Guardia of Armendariz that arrived with nine ships in Portobelo on 20 May 1615 to collect the Peruvian treasure. Certainly some merchandise was carried, though no reports have been uncovered that reveal any details.⁸⁰

The year 1616 marks a turning point in activity on the isthmus: with only two exceptions, for the next quarter-century fairs would be celebrated every year. The imperial economy did not improve from this new policy, but the Panamanian economy entered its golden era. The 1616 fleet that was brought out from Spain by Diego de Santurze Orozco consisted of 23 ships, of which 9 formed the military escort. The departure of the fleet from Seville was delayed several times because of problems in getting together sufficient cargo to justify the effort. All during the months of preparation, angry protests from the Consulado to the Casa de Contratación were made regarding the large amounts of merchandise being shipped on galleons of the Armada de la Guardia. Once in the Panama, however, the fair went off as planned, though only 500,090 pesos in registered goods were exchanged, but estimates of fraud as high as 85 percent of the total reported inflate the figure to nearly 1,000,000⁸¹ pesos. The fair was modest by any measure. The Armada de la Guardia of the same year had been scheduled to go to Panama, but the Consulado managed to prevail upon the Casa de Contratación to issue an order keeping the galleons from⁸² calling at either Cartagena or Portobelo.

The 1617 fair was celebrated in June after the arrival of the ten ships of the flota of Francisco Barnegas. Shortly after the flota arrived, the nine ships of the Armada de la Guardia also sailed into Portobelo. The merchandise exchanged

was valued at 913,330 pesos, with estimates of fraud at about 90 percent. The fair of 1617 was, on the whole, larger and more successful than those of the previous years, indeed one has to go back as far as 1608 to find a larger one. The consequences of risking saturation, however, were soon apparent when in 1618 merchants had a difficult time in⁸³ exchanging their goods. The 1618 fair was administered by the Marqués de Cadereyta who had brought out the flota and Armada de la Guardia--this time sailing together--in spring. The number of ships in the convoy was 23 and goods exchanged were valued at 671,850 pesos. Over the course of the 29 day fair, few profits were made as goods were sold at or below cost because of market saturation. Fraud again ran rampant, though Vila Vilar's estimates report the level down from the previous year; Moreyra y Paz-Soldán mentions that over 400,000 ducats in unregistered silver were loaded under the noses of royal officials at the fair. On the whole, therefore, the 1618 fair was a failure, though Panamanian⁸⁴ arrieros must have shown sizeable profits.

The fleet of the Marqués de Cadereyta of 1619 differed from others of the decade in that the military escort consisted of only two ships instead of a usual full-scale Armada de la Guardia. These two galleons, combined with 11 merchantmen arrived in Portobelo at the end of June, staying for 30 days. The fair, however, was a disaster. Only

317,800 pesos of goods were exchanged, and fraud at levels as high 75 percent was suspected. The functioning of the trajín itself suffered because the level of water on the Río Chagres was insufficient for navigation. Since all the silver had to be transferred from Panama City by mule, delays at the fair⁸⁵ caused economic disorder.

The decade of the 1620s was a remarkable one for the economy of the isthmus, if not for the imperial economy as a whole. Fairs continued every year, except for breaks in 1623 and 1625, and the size of the annual fleets grew to record proportions, especially after 1625. The basic problems that plagued the fairs, however, remained unsolved.

Juan de Benavides y Bazán brought out the 1620 flota, which was made up of 17 ships. Again, the fair itself did not go off well. A score of letters were sent from the isthmus to the crown detailing the economic crisis at Panama that threatened to sink the imperial economy into depression. The principal theme of these letters was, as always, fraud. A report made by Juan López de Cañicares provides details.

. . . Your Majesty, in this port we do not have that which is necessary to maintain sufficient royal officials to guard against fraud when it comes to verifying the registers of the ships. During the fairs we find many shops and houses filled with merchandise, but when we ask to whom it belongs we find that the owners are foreigners. . . .⁸⁶

Another similar report deserves quoting:

Señor: We the royal officers of Tierra Firme comply with the duties of our offices when we

report the following. The royal revenue of this kingdom for many years has not been sent to the crown because the expenses in your presidios are large. The almojarifazgos and the alcavalas have come to such a diminished level that the worth of the almojarifazgo in the port of Nombre de Dios used to be 200,000-300,000 pesos ensayados, but in Portobelo it has come to be as little as 100,000, 80,000, 50,000, or even only 40,000 pesos, and the fleet from this past year of 1619 the almojarifazgo was worth only 32,000 pesos. That of this year apparently is going to be 50,000, and the alcavalas of the said fleets will profit your majesty only between 10,000 and 12,000 pesos whereas in earlier years it brought in 30,000 to 40,000. In 1619 the alcavalas were worth only 8,200 pesos. . . . We believe that each year it will be less, and this only in the tax profits of Portobelo--taxes in the rest of the kingdom will come down respectively.

The causes of such grand diminution cannot be attributed to a drop in shipping, even though in the old times the fleets that came from Spain consisted of 20 to 29 ships and those of recent years have had only 8 to 10 ships because it is a certainty that the little fleets which presently come are worth in treasure far more than the old ones that were loaded with volumous things. Now, loaded with precious things, they pay few taxes because (of the way the classes are assigned). . . . Indeed, the 8 or 10 ships that come in the present flotas have much more value than the more than 20 ships of old because they bring things which rich merchants buy at a great price, such as fine cloth, gold brocades, silk, flemish wool, and other things which rarely came on the old flotas. At the fairs, however, they are registered into the (old) classes, rough cloth, etc., and thus do not bring in the proper taxes. . . . Moreover, no one knows what is contained in the crates that pass through the customs house. Merchants unload goods without fear of being caught because no royal officials or police dare ask of the contents or if the taxes have been properly paid. Often, indeed, they did not know who to ask if they wanted to. The merchants and the military men (that

come on the flota) are so powerful that the ministers of the crown in this port find themselves so intimidated that they do not, nor can they, force the proper payment of taxes. . . .⁸⁷

Fraudulent dealings at Portobelo had become institutionalized. Reform, if it was to come, would have to be brought about against the will not only of cunning merchants, but also in opposition to the flota officials entrusted with the well being of the very fairs that were being pilfered. To be sure, by the early seventeenth century, the crown had lost control of the mercantile system not only to the foreigner, but also to Spanish participants in the Indies trade.

The 1621 fair was less of a success than 1620 had been with only 364,350 pesos of goods being exchanged, almost 200,000 pesos below the 1620 figure of 551,900 pesos. The number of ships under the command of Juan Flores de Rabanal stood at 19, 2 more than the previous year. In Sevilla, merchants had unsuccessfully tried to limit the flota tonnage to 1,600 in order to dent the surplus in goods that made it impossible to sell goods at a profit. More successful were the merchants of Cádiz, often large players in Portobelo, who managed to get away with sending only one ship.⁸⁸

Prices at the three-week long fair of 1623 were also low. Lope de Almandariz, the Marqués de Cadereyta, commanded the 12 ship fleet that arrived in Portobelo at the beginning of July. The poor showing of the previous year was barely

Table 2-10

Flotas and Fairs of Tierra Firme, 1620-1629

YEAR	FAIRS	CAPTAIN GENERAL	SHIPS	TONS	VALUE OF FAIR	VALUE SOURCE
1620 (a)	1	Juan de Benavides y Bazán	17	7060	551,900p	Almojarifazgo
1621 (b)	1	Juan Flores de Rabanal	19	7070	364,350p	Almojarifazgo
1622 (c)	1	Marqués de Cadereyta	12	4720	459,230p	Almojarifazgo
1623 (d)	0	Antonio de Oquendo	11	4700	0	-
1624 (e)	1	Tomás de la Raspurú	23	10408	1,385,297p	Almojarifazgo
1625 (f)	0	Marqués de Cadereyta	11	5028	0	-
1626 (g)	1	Gerónimo Gómez de Sandoval	23	11858	955,230p	Almojarifazgo
1627 (h)	1	Roque Centeño	18	8532	-	-
1628 (i)	1	Tomás de la Raspurú	20	10190	-	-
1629 (j)	1	Fadrique de Toledo y Osorio	29	15600	8,273,095p	Avería
TOTALS	8		193	85166		

Notes

a. Chaunu 6-4, pp. 564-565; Vila Vilar, p. 51; Lynch, ii p. 165; Juan López de Canicares to crown, 6 July 1620, AGI Contratación 5116; Oficiales Reales de Portobelo to crown, 7 July 1620, AGI Contratación 5116.

b. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 6-7; Vila Vilar, p. 51.

Table 2-10 continued

- c. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 26-27; Vila Vilar, p. 51; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 74; Casa de Contratación to Juan Núñez, 2 August 1622, AGI Contratación 5189; Diego Pínelo to Casa de Contratación, 26 August 1623, AGI Contratación 5116; Marqués de Cadereyta to Casa de Contratación, Habana, 12 December 1622, AGI Contratación 5116.
- d. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 44-45.
- e. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 74, 88-89; Vila Vilar, p. 51; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 74; Rodrigo de Mendoza to Crown, 8 July 1624, AGI Indiferente General 2665; Tomas de la Raspurú to Consejo, 11 October 1624, AGI Indiferente General 2665; Lynch, ii p. 174.
- f. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 96-97; Lynch, ii p. 174; Registro de la Flota, 30 November 1625, AGI Contratación 5189.
- g. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 131; Vila Vilar, p. 51; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 75; Oficiales Reales de Portobelo to Casa de Contratación, 11 June 1626, AGI Contratación 5117.
- h. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 134-137; "Sobre los galeones que est año han de ir por la plata," 5 January 1627, AGI Contratación 5173.
- i. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 152-157; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 75; Casa de Contratación to Don Luis Velasco, 10 April 1629, AGI Contratación 5189.
- j. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 170-173, 202; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 75; Lynch, ii p. 165; Casa de Contratación to the Conde de la Puebla, 2 April 1629, AGI Contratación 5189; Vicens Vives, p. 401.

surpassed as only 459,230 pesos in merchandise were exchanged according to official records. The Dutch merchandise that had traditionally made up a large part of the cargo loaded at Sevilla was absent this year owing to the implementation of the embargo on Dutch commerce that came as a result of renewed hostilities with Spain. Complaints of German, French, and English intrusion into the market, however, demonstrate that other nations were more than capable of taking up the slack. On the return voyage one galleon--the Atocha recovered in 1986 by treasure hunter Mel Fisher--was lost with a significant proportion of the crown returns from Tierra Firme. The storm that took down the Atocha drove the surviving ships of the flota back to Havana, disrupting the regular flow of ships across the Atlantic. Chaunu reports this as the principal reason for the absence of a Portobelo⁸⁹ fair in 1623.

Though no fair was held in Panama during 1623--much to the relief of the merchants of Sevilla, if not of the Panamanian arrieros--a fleet under Antonio de Oquendo did arrive in Portobelo to collect the accumulation of royal silver. In addition, Oquendo brought out 4,000 quintales of⁹⁰ mercury to be sent south to the Peruvian mines.

1624 was an eventful year. The fleet, brought out under Tomás de la Raspurú, was the largest since 1610 at 23 ships with over 10,000 tons capacity. Several values regarding the

value of the fair have been uncovered ranging from a low of just over 1,000,000 pesos, to a high of nearly ten times that amount. Vila Vilar, moreover, estimates the amount of unregistered goods, together with other frauds, to be something just under 8,000,000 pesos. Whatever value is used to judge the fair, 1624 stands as a grand success in comparison to the preceding years. Even so, merchants complained of low prices, especially with regard to textile goods, owing not so much to saturation of the Peruvian market as to oversupply at the fair itself: the ten merchant ships, including three from Cádiz, that made up the bulk of the flota had brought so much cargo that the fair infrastructure could not absorb it all. Accordingly, many Spanish merchants were unable to make large profits in the trading. Even so, the 1624 fair reconfirmed the danger of a policy of yearly fairs. This, one of the most successful of the decade, came about only because the previous year had seen little or no commercial activity.

91

The Marqués de Cadereyta commanded the 1625 armada. As in the case of 1623, no fair was celebrated. The armada, however, did bring back 736,500 pesos in crown revenue, an important contribution given the circumstances then prevailing in the Dutch War. The greatest threat to the carrera, however, did not come from the Dutch (who were even then operating in large numbers in the Pacific), but rather from the English. In November an English fleet attacked

Cádiz, destroying much of the shipping preparing to make the voyage to Tierra Firme. The danger to transatlantic shipping was so great that larger and larger contingents of armed warships would be required to escort the merchantmen to the New World.⁹²

Fifteen warships accompanied eight merchantmen on the 1626 run, Gerónimo Gómez de Sandoval commanding. At the fair, which lasted from 26 June until 11 July, just under 1,000,000 pesos in goods were exchanged. The royal revenue from Peru exceeded 3,500,000 pesos. The fair was a success, again testifying to the merits of a two year trade cycle over a yearly one. Fraud, of course, was still a great problem, so much so that this same year the Casa de Contratación began thinking about building an aduana on the Portobelo square in an effort to bring about greater compliance with royal tax laws. A larger government presence, it was argued, would surely expand the tax take. No action on the proposal was taken.⁹³

Very little information is available about the 1627 fleet of Roque Centeño. What is known is this: it consisted of 18 ships, half galleons and half merchantmen, and the return cargo included a shipment of 4,200 pesos worth of Chilean copper. The flota was to have brought a substantial amount of mercury from Europe, but as there were over 10,000 quintales already in Panama waiting for shipment to Peru, none was carried.⁹⁴

As in the case of the previous year, not much is known about de la Raspurú's 20 ship fleet of 1628. With over 10,000 tons carrying capacity, the fleet was larger than usual. Moreyra y Paz Soldán reports that over 8,000,000 pesos in bullion (public and private combined) was carried back to Spain on these ships, much of it sequestered by the crown to pay for the war in the Low Countries. The fair must have been a large one, though no exact figures have been found.⁹⁵

The final year of the decade saw the arrival of the largest fleet in Portobelo's--indeed, in Panama's--history. Fadrique de Toledo y Osorio led 29 ships with a capacity of 15,600 tons. Figures as to the value of goods traded at the fair are not available, though Chaunu included a reference to 8,000,000 pesos in one of his notes. At any rate, the fair was one of the largest on record, so large that many Sevillian merchants hesitated to participate for fear that the market could not hold up to the strain of so much merchandise. Some even refused to load cargos at Sevilla, arguing instead for limits on quantity to prepare the market for 1630. Another worry was the expansion in the level of activity of Dutch corsairs in 1628, a year which saw the loss of the New Spain treasure to Piet Hyen. After all, there was no guarantee that a repeat of that bold performance, perhaps closer to Panamanian waters, was not in the offing. The fair itself, however, was a success, not only for the merchants involved,

but also for crown customs agents who were able to point out that they had actually confiscated a cargo of illegal Chinese silk cloth.
96

More than any other period, 1628-30 stands as the principal watershed in the economic history of seventeenth-century Panama. It was during these years that tonnage figures reached their highest totals, but within a year the values of registered merchandise traded at Portobelo were reduced by almost half. The years 1631 to 1634 saw rapid decline in the isthmian economy, a situation that stabilized at a lower level for the next four years before falling sharply again in 1638. On the other hand, fairs were celebrated every year except in 1632 and 1638, providing the usual economic gains to the support industries located on the isthmus. In short, although the southern arm of the carrera was undergoing a serious decline, the economy of Panama, if slowed, was still in the midst of its golden era.

The 1630 fleet was charged to Alonso de Múxica and was made up of 21 ships, 11 of which formed the defensive escort. Dutch successes in Bahia were seen as a direct threat to the Tierra Firme leg of the carrera, hence the large number of armed galleons sent with the merchantmen. Trading at the fair itself was good. Over 1,120,000 pesos worth of merchandise were exchanged during the three weeks of the June fair. This fair, however, was the last great success of the
97
decade.

Table 2-11

Flotas and Fairs of Tierra Firme, 1630-1339

YEAR	FAIRS	CAPTAIN GENERAL	SHIPS	TONS	VALUE OF FAIR	VALUE SOURCE
1630 (a)	1	Alonso de Múxica	21	8920	1,120,750p	Alcabala
1631 (b)	1	Tomás de la Raspurú	22	8690	403,400p	Alcabala
1632 (c)	0	Antonio de Oquendo	14	6880	0	-
1633 (d)	1	Marques de Cadereyta	19	7630	826,250p	Alcabala
1634 (e)	1	Antonio de Oquendo	14	6980	319,500p	Alcabala
1635 (f)	1	Roque Cantero y Ordóñez	15	6610	638,200p	Alcabala
1636 (g)	1	Luis de Aguilar	13	6610	505,000p	Alcabala
1637 (h)	1	Francisco de Mexía	20	7726	571,890p	Almojarifazgo
1638 (i)	1	Carlos de Ybarra	8	4640	-	Alcabala
1639 (j)	1	Luis Fernández de Córdoba	14	5410	-	-
TOTALS	9		160	70096	4,384,990p+	

Notes

a. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 184-189; Vila Vilar, p. 53; Registros de Plata, 1630, AGI Contratación 2900.

b. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 204-207; Vila Vilar, p. 53; "Instrucciones de Tomás de la Raspurú . . . para navegación y combate de la misma," AGI Contratación 5173; Casa de Contratación to Gaspar de Vargas, 22 May 1631, AGI Contratación 5189.

Table 2-11 continued

- c. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 216-217.
- d. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 230-241; Vila Vilar, p. 53; Simón Báez Enríquez to Casa de Contratación, 21 February 1634, AGI Contratación 5177.
- e. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 248-251; Vila Vilar, p. 53.
- f. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 264-267; Vila Vilar, p. 53; Casa de Contratación to Consejo, 9 August 1634, AGI Contratación 5189.
- g. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 286-289; Vila Vilar, p. 53; Lynch, ii p. 165.
- h. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 308-313; Vila Vilar, pp. 51-53; Thomas Gage, A New Survey of the West Indies pp. 445-450; Ailyn C. Loosley, p. 321.
- i. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 324-329, 332; Lynch, ii p. 165; Casa de Contratación to Alberto Parto Calderón, 16 September 1639, AGI Contratación 5189; Don Enrique Enríques to Consejo, 18 July 1638, AGI Contratación 5118.
- j. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 342-347.

Tomás de la Raspurú commanded the 1631 fleet, which was sent out on a general war footing, so great was the fear of Dutch action against the vital Sevilla-Portobelo trade route. Again, 21 ships made up the armada, 8 of which were warships. More than this, the fleet sailed with the New Spain armada for still greater protection. Even though there were more merchant ships in this fleet than had come over during 1630, the fair was a failure. Only 403,400 pesos in registered goods were traded, less than half of that exchanged at any recent fair.⁹⁸

The next year saw a smaller flota of only 14 ships commanded by Antonio de Oquendo. No fair was celebrated. Worries of Dutch activity still prevailed, causing the fleet to winter in Havana, thus delaying the return of royal silver by one year.⁹⁹ Because no fair had been held in 1632, the 1633 fair met with some success, though the 826,250 pesos in goods traded was not as valuable as totals from some previous years. The 19 ships of the 1633 fleet of the Marqués de Cadereyta again sailed with the New Spain fleet for added protection.¹⁰⁰ The fair lasted from 8 to 25 August.

Eleven months later, on 8 July, the fair of 1634 began. The number of ships that came out under Oquendo was 14, but the returns hardly justified the effort. Some 319,500 pesos in registered goods were exchanged, making 1634 the poorest trading since well before the turn of the century. The

fair, though limited in scope and ambition, did function properly: evidently all the merchandise was exchanged without difficulty.¹⁰¹

The value of the 1635 fair was up from that of 1634 to 638,200 pesos. The 15 ships that made up the fleet were commanded by Roque Centeño y Ordóñez and arrived in Portobelo on 18 July. The division of cargo space was two-thirds for Sevillian merchants, one-third for those of Cádiz. Additional defense worries resulting from the outbreak of war with France further motivated the additional allocation of military resources to the carrera. The Dutch occupation of Curacao this year made matters worse. Indeed, so significant were foreign threats to the carrera that the number of ships in the escort squadron was greater than that of the merchant flota. The practice of sailing with the New Spain fleet became institutionalized after 1635 as this was the cheapest and most effective means of providing for the added defense needs of both legs of the carrera.¹⁰²

Don Luis de Aguilar was captain general of the 1636 fleet. Just over 500,000 pesos in registered goods were traded at the fair, and a much larger sum of silver was returned, only to be sequestered by the crown upon arrival in Sevilla.¹⁰³ The next year, 1637, saw the arrival of 19 ships under Francisco de Mexía, but again only just over 500,000 pesos in merchandise were traded. This was the fair witnessed by Thomas Gage, whose description of the fair

activity is so often quoted by historians. Though the 1637 fair was a small one, Gage's stories of heaps of silver in the plaza and the thriving trading that was carried out that year serves to point out how remarkable the great fairs must have been.¹⁰⁴

The constant influx of Spanish goods into Peru from fair after fair, year after year, made it impossible for the merchants of Sevilla to make the profits desired for such a risky enterprise as the Indies run. In 1638 the Consulado was able to prevail upon the Casa de Contratación to suspend the flota for one year, agreeing instead to support a government compromise reminiscent of earlier years of sending an armada out under Carlos de Ybarra to recover the royal silver. Eight ships left San Lucar on 26 April for this very purpose. Naturally, contraband cargoes were carried as well as ballast stones. To be sure, reports of fraud--contraband trading as well as shady reporting of bullion totals--were numerous in the aftermath of Ybarra's arrival on the isthmus. One estimate stated that the unregistered cargo traded in 1638 should have brought in 30,000 pesos in almojarifazgo taxes alone. Proposals to limit illegal trading abounded that year, the most eloquent of which called for better record keeping as the best means of attacking conniving merchants. The author of the telling report claimed exact registry lists, rather than general cargo classifications, and sealed

documents carried in duplicate reporting exact information as to owner, shipper, value, and contents of each consignment of goods should be included as part of each ship's papers. More customs agents at Portobelo, he wrote, were also needed to handle the extra paperwork. Fraud or no fraud, the crown received more than its due when 500,000 ducats were sequestered upon the return of the fleet to Spain. ¹⁰⁵

The final year of the decade saw the celebration of a fair in mid-August under the direction of Luis Fernández de Córdoba. Financial problems in Sevilla caused by repeated sequestrations of bullion by the crown created a crisis at the Spanish end of the carrera that hindered preparation of the 1639 flota. Once under way, 13 ships cleared San Lucar for the voyage to Portobelo. Little information is available about the success or failure of the fair. Indeed, all that is known is that one ship in the fleet, the N.S. de la Concepción from Cádiz had a displacement of 1,000 tons. ¹⁰⁶

The 1640s, so disastrous for Spain in Europe, saw a slight recovery in the Tierra Firme carrera economy, a rise that peaked between 1643 and 1645. Thereafter the grand slide continued until well past the end of the decade.

The fleet of 1640, 23 ships strong, was led out by Gómez de Sandoval. The fleet had been delayed in its sailing and thus did not arrive in Portobelo until December. Many consulado members argued for suspending trading for a year, but the Spanish crown was in such need of revenue following

Table 2-12

Flotas and Fairs of Tierra Firme, 1640-1649

YEAR	FAIRS	CAPTAIN GENERAL	SHIPS	TONS	VALUE OF FAIR	VALUE SOURCE
1640 (a)	1	Gómez de Sandoval	23	8506	184,650p	Alcabala
1641	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1642 (b)	0	Francisco Díaz Pimienta	13	-	0	-
1643 (c)	1	Francisco Díaz Pimienta	27	10227	1,019,700p	Alcabala
1644 (d)	0	Gerónimo Gómez de Sandoval	13	7440	149,260p	Almojarifazgo
1645 (e)	1	Pedro de Ursúa	27	10470	0	-
1646 (f)	1	Pedro de Ursúa	18	6448	1,006,300p	Alcabala
1647 (g)	1	Antonio de Oquendo	16	6060	328,950p	Alcabala
1648	0	No Fleet	0	0	1,162,350p	Alcabala
1649 (h)	1	Carlos Martín de Mencos	16	6534	196,160p	Almojarifazgo
					0	-
					1,131,900p	Alcabala
					243,830p	Almojarifazgo
TOTALS	6		153	55685	4,833,850p+	

Notes

a. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 362-371; Vila Vilar, p. 53; Casa de Contratación to Pedro Fernández Moreno, 19 January 1640, AGI Contratación 5175.

b. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 398-401; Francisco Díaz Pimienta to Casa de Contratación, 3 March 1642, AGI Contratación 5101.

Table 2-12 continued

- c. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 402-403; Vila Vilar, pp. 51-53; Oficiales Reales of Portobelo to Casa de Contratación, 14 September 1643, AGI Contratación 5118; Consulado of Sevilla to Casa de Contratación, 20 October 1643, AGI Contratación 5118.
- d. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 432-435; Consulado of Sevilla to Casa de Contratación, 8 August 1644, AGI Contratación 5119.
- e. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 444-447; Vila Vilar, p. 51-53; "Listo de mercaderos que he pagan a SM," 2 March 1646, AGI Contratación 5119.
- f. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 464-469; Vila Vilar, pp. 51-53.
- g. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 478-483; Vila Vilar, pp. 51-53; "Prevision de los naos para la flota de Tierra Firme," 29 June 1647, AGI Contratación 5176.
- h. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 508-511; Vila Vilar, pp. 51-53; Lynch, ii p. 165.

the twin disasters of revolts in Catalonia and Portugal that the Casa de Contratación insisted on a departure, no matter how late. Indeed, the Casa argued that profits were still possible despite the fact that merchants the year before had had a difficult time in unloading their wares at any price. The news of an 80 ship Dutch fleet that had been sent out to capture the flota also frightened many merchants from participation that year. In the end, the fair was one of the smallest on record, only 184,650 pesos in goods being¹⁰⁷ traded.

The loss of many ships of the New Spain fleet in a storm on the 1640 return voyage, together with the bad timing of the Tierra Firme fleet--which found itself still in the Americas for all of 1641--created a tonnage crisis in Spain. Further administrative problems, mostly arising from the disruption of the Olivares regime and the war with Portugal, made it impossible to send any fleet to Panama that year, not even one to pick up the royal silver (a testimony as to how bad things really were). This was the first year since 1597 that no organized fleet had arrived on the Panama coast. The next year, 1642, was hardly better. The 1640 fleet of Sandoval still found itself in Havana waiting to return to Sevilla, but seemingly unable to clear the docks. By now it had been two years since any silver from Peru had made its way to the cash-starved peninsula. Some action was

necessary, so a fleet of 13 ships was sent out under Francisco Díaz Pimienta to collect the accumulation of wealth at Portobelo and to bring back the 1640 fleet. No registered merchandise was carried, although some ships of the fleet did bring back cargoes of indigo as well as silver. The need for silver in Spain had, in fact, deterred this fleet of galleons from its primary purpose. It had been planned to send the 13 ships to the Windward Islands to disrupt northern European activity there. In abandoning this strategy the crown also abandoned any hope of eliminating the fledgling
108
British and French colonies in this region.

Francisco Díaz Pimienta served as captain general on the 1643 flota, which in contrast to the 1642 fleet, was a full-scale undertaking. Of the 27 ships that went to Panama that year, 5 were from Cádiz. The fair was a success, hardly suprising given that the last years had seen a near complete suspension in trade between Spain and South America. Almojarifazgo taxes were paid on just over 1,000,000 pesos of goods, though the total amount traded in 1643 was far higher. Chaunu, for instance, found documents indicating that foreign merchants alone carried some 1,500,000 pesos of goods to the fair. Despite active trading, a reversal of the trade balance was becoming apparent and merchants were faced with a difficult task in getting rid of their goods. As will be recalled, during most of the first half of the seventeenth century, quantities of silver brought by the Peruvian

merchants to the fair were of such proportions as not to have imposed a limitation on the carrera economy. Rather, it was the saturation of the New World markets that was the principal constraining factor. By 1643, however, complaints were again being voiced that trade with China and the Philippines was diverting precious bullion from the carrera, causing economic difficulty at Portobelo. Of course, repeated crown sequestrations of silver at the Sevillian docks also drained needed capital from the system, probably more so than commerce with Asia, but it was far easier to point the accusing finger at distant Manila than toward Valladolid.¹⁰⁹

The difficulties in trading goods at the 1643 fair led to a financial crisis in Sevilla the following year when merchants were unable to put together a flota in time to sail before the end of the year. Many consulado members had by now lost faith in the Panamanian fairs altogether, claiming that to properly market their merchandise they would have to begin traveling to Peru in person, eliminating Peruvian middlemen. From this time onward, some Spanish merchants began more actively participating in retail sales in Peru, though most by far continued to trade by the traditional pattern. Even if a fleet could not be sent in 1644, the crown was so starved for New World cash that it ordered the galleons that had been assembled for the defense escort to sail without the merchantment. Gerónimo Gómez de Sandoval

commanded this 13 ship fleet which called briefly at
 110
 Portobelo.

A large fair was held in September 1645 after the arrival in Portobelo of a 27 ship fleet under Pedro de Ursúa. This, of course, was the flota that was to have sailed the previous year. The delay in departure led to a larger commitment of merchandise and capital, essentially representing two fairs in one, and a fair in which merchants were willing participants given the market preparation provided by paucity of commerce in 1644. Just over 1,000,000 pesos in goods were traded, 10 percent controlled by the 4 richest merchants that attended that year. Barón Jorge de Paz, with 43,795 pesos in merchandise, was the most powerful merchant that year, followed by Juan Estevan Imbrea (24,087 pesos), Duarte Fernández (21,898 pesos) and Salvador Báez
 111
 (12,000 pesos).

The Years of Decline, 1646-1682

The large fair of 1645, so successful in and of itself, ruined the market for 1646. Merchants who might have been given cause to hope the carrera had gained a new level of stability found themselves both dissatisfied and broke after a near-record poor showing in November 1646. The 18 ship fleet, again brought out by Capitán General Pedro de Ursúa, supplied merchants gathered at Portobelo with an ample store of European goods, but since no one was buying, only 328,950

pesos worth were exchanged. The dismal showing had a positive impact, however: so little was exchanged that the market for 1647 was primed to absorb a larger amount of merchandise. The two-year cycle still prevailed.¹¹²

The decade 1648-1661 provides a unique opportunity for a closer study of the Portobelo fairs because of the discovery of a previously overlooked document detailing individual merchants and the amounts of sales tax they paid on their yearly transactions. This additional information could not have covered a more significant period. The steady decline in the Tierra Firme carrera economy that had begun earlier in the century (recall that 1628-1630 was labled as the principal watershed) now moved into an era of wholesale collapse, finally ending the golden age of the Panamanian trajín economy. The list of merchants makes it possible to study the impact of the economic crisis on individuals as well as on the system as a whole.

As expected, 1647-48 did turn out to be a better year, even though only 16 ships made up the fleet. The flota was brought out by Antonio de Oquendo, by now a veteran of the Tierra Firme run--it was his last voyage to the New World. In contrast to the pittance traded at the fair the previous year, 1647-48 saw the transfer of 1,162,350 pesos in goods, making the fair, conducted over Christmas, the largest of the decade. Of the merchants participating, three controlled over a third of the total between them. At the head of the

list was Lorenzo Ramírez de Prado who paid taxes on 144,550 pesos of goods. With only slightly less merchandise stood the Condesa de Sornachuelos (109,000 pesos) and Juan de Solórcano (103,350 pesos). The presence of a woman near the top of the list of powerful merchants is indeed suprising-- but more suprising still is the fact that the Condesa came to dominate almost every fair for the next ten years. Her presence overshadowed most other merchants, including others who regularly brought large quantities of goods to the fair. Most merchants did not command the capital resources of these three major players. Instead, over half of the ones named in the documents brought cargoes valued between 10,000 and 50,000 pesos, and a few brought less than 5,000 pesos.¹¹³

Because of the late sailing in 1647, and despite a quick turn-around that saw Oquendo back in Spain on 14 May 1648, the fleet that was preparing to sail for the 1648 fair was held over in Cádiz after a failed attempted start in Spring. Carlos Martín de Mencos commanded what became the flota of 1649. His fleet arrived in Portobelo on 20 April, and within a few days the fair was underway. The total amount of registered merchandise exchanged was valued at 1,131,900 pesos. Of the merchants that participated in the 1648 fair, all but seven returned for the 1649 trading. Lorenzo Ramírez de Prado, 1648's wealthiest merchant, brought only 3,300 pesos in goods to this fair. Whatever the cause

Table 2-13
Merchants at the Portobelo Fairs, 1648-1661

Merchant	1648	1649	Value of Merchandise (Pesos Ensayados)				1661	Total
			1650	1651	1652	1654		
Sra. Condesa de Sornachuelos	109,000	43,800	186,800	233,500	260,950	156,700	176,900	1,167,650
Juan de Solórzano	103,350	45,050	121,100	109,450	312,450	175,750	64,600	931,750
Diego Sáenz	144,550	750	110,000	99,850	121,700	96,550	94,250	523,100
Lorenzo Ramírez de Prado	51,750	3,300	7,700	17,150	18,500	23,550	12,850	221,400
Juan de Sancaez	14,500	5,050	20,450	14,050	42,150	17,150	45,300	159,550
Antonio de Castro y Cabrera	16,050	4,650	19,150	14,000	23,400	23,450	37,600	157,250
Diego de Laratte	13,450	3,700	16,300	2,150	45,150	18,700	39,450	144,550
Francisco Fernández de Madrigal	13,800	5,750	16,300	23,550	31,000	20,450	23,950	138,900
Amador de Avila	-	250	57,900	22,500	26,450	14,200	14,000	124,450
Juan de Pareja	11,150	5,600	21,050	13,700	28,150	9,550	31,750	135,300
Pedro de Baneo	1,850	3,600	15,350	18,500	28,350	38,500	12,850	120,950
Miguel Ruiz de la Vega	33,350	500	1,200	11,850	7,450	29,800	29,100	119,000
Gerónimo de Plaza	9,300	4,850	15,350	20,250	22,850	13,000	20,750	113,250
Juan Ruiz de la Peña	32,600	-	-	10,150	-	31,750	31,950	111,950
Antonio de Aquán	13,150	1,950	7,050	9,750	30,300	14,250	20,750	106,450
Juan Ruiz de Montalban	10,350	2,350	11,250	15,150	24,000	12,200	17,400	102,800
Tomás Rodríguez Romero	23,650	500	1,200	8,600	13,350	21,250	21,250	98,300
Juan del Arquéz	20,150	-	-	9,600	21,200	14,650	12,850	89,800
? de Moscoso	11,350	-	-	11,350	15,500	22,600	3,800	78,450
Francisco de Naca	-	1,350	7,700	3,550	15,900	9,000	12,400	68,400
Juan Ochoa de y Piña	-	2,000	7,850	4,100	5,500	8,150	16,250	53,250
Joseph de Moscoso	-	250	2,650	1,350	15,950	8,800	12,400	46,500
Francisco de Segura	1,300	-	-	2,700	2,700	2,700	5,300	44,750
Juan García de la Cámaras	4,800	1,500	2,600	2,450	600	600	600	14,700
Bartolomé López de Sahurú	3,600	-	-	1,200	1,200	1,200	2,350	13,150
Juan de Setueta	-	-	-	2,050	2,050	4,100	-	9,150
Gregorio Pérez de Andrade	-	-	-	250	250	250	-	8,200
Pedro Banón de Pineda	700	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,700
Total	643,750	136,750	644,250	697,850	1,152,350	778,300	812,250	4,905,250
% of Fair Total Represented	55	12	56	31	99	99	55	48

Source: Alcabala payments contained in "Lista de mercaderos que he pagan derechos a SM," AGI Contaduría 1507.

of his downfall, over the course of the next six fairs his fortunes never reached anything near the level of his 1648 showing. Most of the other merchants also brought less merchandise than they had the year before, but since the documentation available reports only about 12 percent of the total goods exchanged (as opposed to 55 percent for 1648), few conclusions can be drawn. The Condesa, however, was there with almost 44,000 pesos worth of goods. On the whole, the fair was a moderate success, though the elation of many merchants must have been tempered by a crown sequestration of 1,000,000 ducats of the private returns immediately upon the flota's return to Spain.¹¹⁴

Juan de Echeverr  was captain general of the 1650 flota, ten ships in all. The fair was conducted in August and over 1,150,000 pesos in registered goods were exchanged. Of this total, the Condesa de Sornachuelos accounted for 186,800 pesos, and her two closest rivals combined another 220,000. One merchant making a big splash at the 1650 fair was Diego S enz. He had not participated in the 1649 fair, and in 1650 his merchandise only amounted to 750 pesos, one of the smallest amounts recorded. By 1651, however, he had become a powerful player bringing 110,000 pesos in goods. For the rest of the decade his portions of the total cargo remained large, only exceeded by the Condesa and Juan de Sol rcano. Most of the minor merchants increased the size of

Table 2-14

Flotas and Fairs of Tierra Firme, 1650-1659

YEAR	FAIRS	CAPTAIN GENERAL	SHIPS	TONS (EST.)	VALUE OF FAIR	VALUE SOURCE
1650 (a)	1	Juan de Escheverri	10	5600	1,150,850p	Alcabala
1651 (b)	1	Pedro de Ursúa	10	4500	2,279,352p	?
1652 (c)	1	Pedro de Ursúa	9	4100	1,153,847p	?
1653 (d)	1	Martin Carlos de Mencos	9	4100	688,622p	?
1654 (e)	1	Marqués de Villarrubia	-	-	553,928p	?
1655	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1656 (f)	1	-	3	2200	584,515p	?
1657	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1658	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1659 (g)	1	Marqués de Villarrubia	15	6200	1,489,737p	?
TOTALS	7		56+	28070+	7,900,851p	

Notes

a. Chaunu 6-5, pp. 520-523; Vila Vilar, p. 53; Lutgardo García Fuentes, El comercio Español con América (1650-1700), pp. 417-20.

b. Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 388, 417-424; Vila Vilar, p. 51.

c. Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 388, 402, 417-424; Lynch, ii p. 166.

Table 2-14 continued

- d. Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 388, 402- 417-424; Haring, p. 65; Oficiales Reales de Portobelo to Casa de Contratación, 6 February 1653, AGI Contaduría 4734.
- e. Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 388, 402, 417-424; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 77; Haring, p. 245.
- f. Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 388, 402, 417-424; Haring, p. 245; Lynch, ii, p. 174.
- g. Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 388, 402, 417-424; Lynch, ii, p. 199; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 79.

their shipments over the year before, most again falling into
¹¹⁵
 the common range of 10,000 to 50,000 pesos.

The next year saw the decade's largest fair, indeed the largest of the cenutry, 1605's being the closest rival. Only 10 ships made up the fleet of Pedro de Ursúa that left San Lúcar 15 June 1651, but the total worth of registered goods traded was 2,279,352 pesos. Over 10 percent of this amount was carried by the Condesa (233,500 pesos). Only one other merchant carried more than 100,000 pesos in goods. Again, most of the merchants brought cargos valued in the 10,000-50,000 peso range. Although the fair was the largest on record, many of the merchants brought smaller consignments than in 1650, and some, such as Juan de Pareja who had sold 57,900 pesos in goods the previous year, only managed to exchange about half that during the active trading of 1651. Again, however, only about 31 percent of the total value of the fair is accounted for in the lists available, making
¹¹⁶
 credible generalizations difficult.

Pedro de Ursúa also commanded the next flota, consisting of just nine ships. The value of the fair came to something over 1,150,000 pesos, a substantial drop from the levels of 1651, but by any measure, a large amount indeed. The data in the merchant lists are very complete for this year, so much so that it is possible to account for all but 1,497 pesos. The formidable Condesa increased the value of her goods by

30,000 pesos from the year before, but she was knocked into second position by Juan de Solorcano who sold some 312,450 pesos in goods. Only 6 of the 28 merchants listed in the documents did not increase the size of their shipments for this fair, and 4 of these maintained the same levels from the previous year. Overall, 1652 represents a highpoint for the merchants being tracked.¹¹⁷

The 1653 fair, valued at 688,622 pesos, is not included in the list of merchants. To be sure, little is known about economic activity that year. Martín Carlos de Mencos (later governor and captain general of Guatemala) commanded the fleet, which consisted of 9 ships, and in addition to the pesos exchanged for merchandise, 165,883 pesos in crown wealth was returned to Spain. Haring wrote that so much silver went by unregistered--something that was also true at the other fairs of the decade--that the crown itself had to pay 90 percent of the avería.¹¹⁸

The Marqués de Villarrubia served as captain general of the 1654 flota. It is not known how many ships made up the fleet. The defense escort was of critical importance in 1654 because of an English fleet that was on station between Portobelo and Cartagena for the specific purpose of taking the flota. No encounters, however, were reported. The fair saw 778,300 pesos in registered goods traded. Again the fair was dominated by a handful of merchants, among whom stood the mighty Condesa (156,700 pesos) and Juan de

Solórcano (175,750 pesos). While it is not known how much merchandise individuals brought to the previous fair, the quantities carried in 1654 were sharply down from levels reached in 1652, most merchants bringing about half their previous totals. Indeed, the turning point had been reached. The curve of economic activity stood poised to plummet still further.¹¹⁹

1655 saw no fleets to Tierra Firme, and the 1656 flota, only three ships strong, goes almost unmentioned in documents. The small fair (584,515 pesos) went mostly unnoticed against the more interesting backdrop of events that occurred on the return voyage the following year. Off Cádiz, an English squadron under Admiral Blake took the¹²⁰ capitana with over 2,000,000 pesos in treasure.

The 1659 fair is far better documented. The fleet, commanded by the Marqués de Villarrubia, was substantially larger, consisting of 15 ships, and the fair correspondingly richer (1,489,737 pesos in goods traded). The small fair of the previous year, and the total suspension of commerce the year before that, had provided the conditions necessary for a great fair in 1659, and indeed profits that year were the largest that had been seen in many years. As in the case of the decade's other fairs, the Condesa de Sornachuelos dominated the trading of 1659 (176,900 pesos). All but one of the merchants attending the 1654 fair attended this one,

most increasing their profit margins substantially. Merchandise carried by Juan García de la Cámaras that had been sold in 1654 for 2,700 pesos now brought nearly twice that amount, and the goods the likes of which had sold for 1,200 pesos at previous fairs now commanded 2,350. The economic upswing, however, was short-lived.¹²¹

In early 1659, the next flota set out from Spain, but storms were so violent that seven ships were lost and Captain General Pablo de Contreras was forced to return to the peninsula. The fleet again set sail in early 1660 with 16 ships. Delays in Cartagena, however, postponed the flota's arrival on the isthmus until early 1661. The long interim since the previous fair--almost two years--meant a good market. Just over 1,000,000 pesos in goods were traded, and crown returns reached almost 400,000 pesos. Most of the merchants that had dominated the fairs of the previous decade did not attend the 1661 fair. Had theirs been the cargoes that had gone down on those seven lost vessels?¹²²

The decade of the 1660s, going back as far as 1659, saw a return to fairs celebrated every other year. The low point in the isthmian economy in the early years of the second half of the seventeenth century had occurred in 1655-1658, bottoming out in the face of nearly 10 years of back-to-back fairs. A return to an alternating pattern led to greater opportunities for profit and a corresponding stability in the southern leg of the carrera. The number of ships sailing to

Portobelo increased, and now that Cádiz had largely replaced Sevilla as the principal Spanish port, the size of each ship grew beyond the 500 ton limit imposed by the shifting sands of the channel at San Lúcar. Despite the modest recovery of the 1660s, the remaining fairs of the century rarely had values exceeding 1,000,000 pesos. To be sure, the late seventeenth-century Trajín was a modest enterprise at best, celebrated in the shadows of past success.

The fair of 1663, held under the Marqués de Villarrubia, was a large one. Indeed it was the last of the great fairs. The value of the crown treasure was 319,605 pesos, and the worth of the merchandise traded 1,131,210 pesos. The 23 ships that made up Villarrubia's flota were the first to sail under the reformed *avería* system, whereby the consulados of Sevilla, Mexico, and Lima paid a flat fee to cover the defense costs of the Atlantic crossing. This reform was implemented in order to encourage merchants to more honestly declare the contents and worth of their cargoes. Under the former system, of course, the *avería* had been raised through taxes on the declared values of cargoes carried by individual merchants. This reform, however, had limited impact, and smuggling continued as before.¹²³

There was no fair in 1664, the next one being held in late 1665. Manuel de Bolaños presided over the 1665 trading after leading a nine ship flota across the Atlantic. The

Table 2-15

Flotas and Fairs to Tierra Firme, 1660-1669

YEAR	FAIRS	CAPTAIN GENERAL	SHIPS	TONS (EST.)	VALUE OF FAIR	VALUE SOURCE
1660	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1661 (a)	1	Pablo de Contreras	16	6300	1,014,432p	?
1662	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1663 (b)	1	Marqués de Villarrubia	23	8900	1,131,210p	?
1664	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1665 (c)	1	Manuel de Bolaños	9	4100	408,063p	?
1666	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1667 (d)	1	Príncipe Monta-Sarcho	13	5600	615,107p	?
1668	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1669	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
TOTALS	4		61	24800	3,168,802p	

Notes

a. Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 388, 402, 417-424.

b. Ibid.

c. Ibid.; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 80; Casa de Contratación to crown, 1 April 1665, AGI Contaduría 1370.

d. Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 78, 232, 388, 402, 417-424.

fair saw modest trading with 408,062 pesos worth of registered merchandise exchanged. The crown revenue from Peru that year was even higher, including all of 6,792 pesos de oro, 2,105 marcos de plata, 129,974 pesos de a ocho, and 395,496 pesos ensayados. Much of this great treasure, however, was lost to African pirates who captured one returning galleon with a cargo valued at over 2,500,000¹²⁴ pesos.

A two year break again divided fairs. The Príncipe Monta-Sarcho commanded the 1667 flota of 13 ships that arrived in Portobelo during summer of that year. Trading was more active than in 1665, but even so, only 615,107 pesos in goods changed hands. The flota's arrival also brought an angry letter from the Casa de Contratación to the officials at Portobelo demanding an end to the practice of arbitrarily setting inordinately high prices on goods being returned to Spain. Such pricings gave the Peruvian merchants a distinct advantage at the fair, indicating without any doubt to whom¹²⁵ the Panamanians owed their economic loyalty. No fairs were celebrated during the remainder of the 1660s, partly because of the chaos caused by the 1668 invasion by Henry Morgan, an event discussed in the chapter 5.

The beginning of the 1670s saw a continued slowing of the economic engine, the fair of 1670 being the only one between 1667 and 1673. A short-term recovery, however, made its debut in 1673 and lasted over the course of three fairs

Table 2-16

Flotas and Fairs of Tierra Firme, 1670-1679

YEAR	FAIRS	CAPTAIN GENERAL	SHIPS	TONS (EST.)	VALUE OF FAIR	VALUE SOURCE
1670 (a)	1	Manuel Bañuelos	8	4000	611,145p 289,702p	? Avería
1671	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1672	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1673 (b)	1	Diego de Ibarra	19	7600	668,619p 656,100p	? Avería
1674 (c)	1	Gabriel de Cruzálegui	2	2000	100,747p	?
1675	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1676 (d)	1	Nicolás Fernández de Córdoba	7	3500	402,760p 423,414p	? Avería
1677	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1678	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1679 (e)	1	Enrique Enríquez de Guzmán	21	8200	756,649p 944,127p	? Avería
TOTALS	5		57	25300	2,748,052p	

Notes

a. Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 194, 388, 402, 417-24; Artur Attmann, American Bullion in the European World Trade, pp. 17, 40; Lynch ii p. 192.

b. Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 166, 194, 388, 403, 417-424.

c. Ibid., 123, 388, 403, 417-424.

d. Ibid.; Attman, p. 17; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 80.

e. Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 166, 403, 417-424; Attmann, pp. 17, 40.

until 1676. After that, precipitous decline set in, a decline from which transisthmian commerce never recovered during the colonial era.

Manuel Bañuelos commanded the 1670 fleet. Eight ships made up the contingent. The fair saw modest traffic, about 611,000 pesos in goods changing hands, but the cargo of the flota was mainly controlled by foreign merchants.¹²⁶ Three years elapsed before the next flota made its way to Portobelo. During the commercial hiatus, however, Panama did not undergo a period of tranquility. As will be discussed in chapter 6, Henry Morgan landed at the Río Chagres and captured San Lorenzo; then followed his historic march to and sack of Panama City. The invasion, even more than his previous attack on Portobelo, disrupted the trade infrastructure and financially destroyed many of Panama's merchants who were still recovering from the loss of the 100,000 ransom they recently paid him for the return of Portobelo. Indeed, the situation in Panama after the attack was so bad that the planned 1671 flota was suspended.

Two years stood between the Morgan invasion and the next fair, but even so, in 1673 commerce still suffered from the event. Merchants in Spain, however, saw this three-year spacing between fairs in a positive light. Thinking that for once saturation in the South American markets was not going to be a limiting factor on transactions, the Cádiz docks were

packed with merchandise--so much so that 19 ships were filled to capacity. The large flota was brought to the New World under Diego de Ibarra. Despite the hopes of the Spanish merchants, trading at the fair was less voluminous than expected. In fact, only 668,619 pesos worth of merchandise was exchanged, barely more than at the dismal 1670 fair. The participants in the planning of the 1673 fair had made a major miscalculation: in addition to the lingering disorder in Panama, the Peruvian market indeed was saturated with European goods--goods that had entered the southern viceroyalty illicitly via Buenos Aires and other routes. To be sure, commercial relations between Upper Peru and Río de la Plata had been growing ever since the restoration of Portuguese independence in 1640. After the separation from the Spanish crown, semi-illicit trading in Portuguese wares through Portobelo was made impossible, driving the Portuguese merchants to seek out and exploit other routes into Peru. Their success, mainly exploiting the Buenos Aires-Tucuman route, is best judged against the panorama of growing poverty in Panama. For the remaining years of the Portobelo fairs, the key obstacle to success was foreign infiltration of markets that had once been attainable only via the ¹²⁷ isthmus.

The disastrous fair of 1673 made many merchants leery of a pair of back-to-back trading years. Accordingly, the consulado acted to limit the size of the 1674 enterprise. To

this end they paid a fee roughly equal to the amount of tax revenue the crown might expect from a full-scale fair. These efforts met with favor and the consulado was permitted to send out just two ships instead of an entire flota. At the truncated fair, barely 100,000 pesos in goods were traded.¹²⁸

No trading occurred in 1675, but a seven ship flota under Captain General Nicolás Fernández de Córdoba arrived in 1676. The flota departed Spain in early 1675, but lingered in Cartagena for many months waiting for the consulado of Peru to send the Armada del Sur north. Once in Portobelo, 402,760 pesos in merchandise were traded, but even so the fair went off very badly. The already precarious health of the carrera was made all the worse by an order from the viceroy of Peru granting permission for some Peruvian merchants to engage in direct commerce with China. The Lima consulado, which was, of course, tied very closely to the Panama route, protested the open policy vigorously, attaining a revocation of the decree in 1678. By then, however, much capital that might have found its way into the plaza at Portobelo was on its way to Asia.¹²⁹

Doubtful of the prevailing economic situation, the consulado bargained with the crown to suspend the 1677 flota, and as in the case of 1674, a large fee was required. But in the end the consulado got its way--no ships were sent to Tierra Firme until the next flota left in July, 1678.¹³⁰

This 26 ship flota, sailing under Enrique Enríquez de Guzmán arrived in a Portobelo still recovering from a 1678 pirate attack led by the notorious Bartholomew Sharp. Damage had been light, however, and trading at the fair was better than that of the recent past, though the 756,649 peso value of registered goods still was a far cry from the wealth traded¹³¹ in earlier years.

The Final Collapse, 1682-1739

The 1680s saw the final collapse of what was left of the Tierra Firme branch of the carrera. Only two fairs were celebrated (1682 and 1686), neither of which were very large. In addition to commercial activity along the Buenos Aires-Tucuman trail and maritime commercial activity directly connecting Peruvian ports with northern Europe and Asia, the 1680s saw the emergence of still another channel for contraband trade. From 1680 onwards, the governors of Havana, Portobelo, and Cartagena were given permission to carry on direct slave trading with English Jamaica. This opened a hornet's nest: with the slaves came hundreds of thousands of pesos of European goods, further undercutting the foundation of the carrera. Slaves were brought to Panama from Jamaica in 1682, 1684, and 1685, together with who knows how much illicit merchandise. In all, 1,032 Jamaican slaves were officially imported into Portobelo

Table 2-17

Fleets and Fairs of Tierra Firme, 1680-1689

YEAR	FAIRS	CAPTAIN GENERAL	SHIPS	TONS (EST.)	VALUE OF FAIR	VALUE SOURCE
1680	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1681	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1682 (a)	1	Marqués de Brenes	23	9000	398,961p	?
1683	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1684	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1685	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1686 (b)	1	Gonzalo Chacón	-	-	474,702p	?
1687	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1688	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1689	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
TOTALS	2		23+	9000+	873,663p	-

Notes

a. Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 389, 403, 417-424; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 80; Attmann, p. 40; Oficiales Reales de Portobelo to Casa de Contratación, 16 March 1682, AGI Contaduría 1370.

b. Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 389, 403, 417-424.

132

during these three years. Given these circumstances, there was really no hope for a resurrection of the carrera of old.

The fair of 1682, which saw official transactions amounting to only 398,961 pesos, lasted 104 days, almost a record. Slow trading--or rather, almost an absence of it--forced the Marqués de Brenes (the unfortunate officer made captain general that year) to delay his departure from the isthmus in hopes of unloading more of the flota's cargo. All offers, no matter how low, were accepted. Since the 1682 flota consisted of 23 ships, getting rid of hundreds tons of unwanted cloth, iron goods, and other merchandise was impossible. Finally, two days after the ides of March, Brenes saw the hopelessness of remaining in Portobelo any longer and returned to Spain, his ships still half full.¹³³

The 1682 fair was such a disaster that four years elapsed before another attempt at commerce was made. Little is known about the 1686 fair, except that Gonzálo Chacón commanded the fleet of ships from Spain. 474,702 pesos in goods exchanged hands, and total remittances to Europe (public and private) exceeded 20,000,000 pesos.¹³⁴ For five years after 1686, no fleet called at Portobelo. As detailed in chapters that follow, however, these same years saw frenzied activity in the form of major construction and fortification projects. To wit, just as Portobelo was sinking into the deepest depths of economic depression, the

crown continued planning for a future that would never materialize. Too many holes had developed in the carrera monopoly for the traditional Panama trajín to remain a major player in international commerce. Indeed, the Peruvian markets were so well supplied by other, illicit means, that in 1691 when another flota finally did arrive, hardly any official transactions took place (216,035 pesos), though the silver returned to Spain that year exceeded 40,000,000 pesos. Perhaps symbolic, the commander of the 22 ship fleet of 1691, the Marqués del Bao, died even as the trading ground to a halt. His body was buried in the parish church on
 135
 Portobelo's second square.

The five-year hiatus of 1686-1691 was exceeded by a seven year interval between the 1691 and 1698 flotas. Led out from Spain by Diego Fernández de Zaldívar, the cargo carried by the fleet was somewhat larger than that of del Bao, and some 623,800 pesos in goods changed hands by the official count. The fleet carried back 36,000,000 pesos in registered silver, though the crown's share was only
 136
 571,090.

After 1698, what was left of an already failed fleet system began to break down rapidly. Fairs would continue until 1739, but they were small, ineffectual, and infrequent. Fairs were celebrated in 1708, 1721, 1726, 1730, and 1739, but toward the end, they hardly resembled their seventeenth-

Table 2-18
Fleets and Fairs of Tierra Firme, 1690-1699

YEAR	FAIRS	CAPTAIN GENERAL	SHIPS	TONS (EST.)	VALUE OF FAIR	VALUE SOURCE
1690	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1691 (a)	1	Marqués de Lado	22	8500	216,035p	?
1692	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1693	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1694	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1695	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1696	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1697	0	No Fleet	0	0	0	-
1698 (b)	1	Diego Fernández de Zaldívar	1	-	623,801p	?
TOTALS	2		23	8500+	839,836p	

Notes

a. Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 389, 403, 417-424.

b. Ibid.

century counterparts. Indeed, new factors, such as the appearance of French trading vessels off the coast of Peru, the frequent visits of South Sea Company asiento ships with much more than slaves as cargo, and the arrival of the so-called English Annual ship from Jamaica at each of the Portobelo fairs, put further strains on a system in
 137
 collapse.

The 1708 fair, the first of the century, was a failure. Even so, 40,000,000 pesos in silver were returned to Spain. The fleet, commanded by José Fernández de Santillán, encountered English pirates on the return voyage, losing 1 ship and 573 persons in the engagement. Earlier, the fair itself was marred by the presence of an English pirate, Thomas Colb, who attacked the mule trains on the road between
 138
 Panama and Portobelo. It is hardly surprising that only one fair was held in the first decades of the eighteenth century--after all, peninsular Spain was torn by the War of Spanish Succession until Utrecht. The disruption of what little Spanish commercial infrastructure remained led to a quick escalation of illicit commerce, not only in Panama, but throughout the American empire. It was during this time that the dependence of the Spanish colonies on direct illicit commerce with northern Europe solidified--another nail in the coffin of the carrera.

Baltasar de Guevara brought out the 13 ships of the next flota in 1721. As in previous fairs, this one was also a

Table 2-19

Fleets and Fairs of Tierra Firme, Eighteenth Century

YEAR	FAIRS	CAPTAIN GENERAL	SHIPS	TONS	VALUE OF FAIR	VALUE SOURCE
1708 (a)	1	José Fernández de Santillán	-	-	-	-
1721 (b)	1	Baltasar de Guevara	-	-	151,774p	-
1726 (c)	1	Marqués de Grillo	17	-	9,614,278p	-
1730 (d)	1	Manuel López Pintado	20	-	9,897,093p	-

Notes

- a. Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 82.
- b. Antonio García-Baquero González, Cádiz y el Atlántico ii pp. 180-181; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 84.
- c. George Dilg, "The Collapse of the Portobelo Fairs," appendix b; García-Baquero González, ii pp. 180-181; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 85.
- d. Dilg, appendix b; García-Baquero González, ii pp. 182-183.

Table 2-20

Cargo Manifest of the English Annual Ship, 1719

Varas of Miscellaneous Cloth	150,869
Varas of Red Cloth	10,406
Varas of Camel Hair Cloth	110,958
Varas of Camel Hair Blankets	150,843
Varas of Gold Cloth	120,226
Varas of Other Cloth	130,625
Units of Drugs	30,006
Pieces of Olandillas	10,200
Pieces of Fine Clothing	936
Pieces of Burlap	40,047
Varas of Roanes	60,662
Small Plates	20,010
Spools of Thread	20,400
Varas Crude Linen	58
Table Cloths	10,386
Napkins	7,836
Bed Spreads	10,386
Hats	200
Packages of Crude Silk	640
Packages of Wool Cloth for Women	10,266
Packages of Wool Cloth for Men	20,200
Pounds of Silver Braid	25
Pounds of Gold Braid	66
Pounds of Silver Thread	26
Pounds of Gold Thread	49
Gold and Silver Buttons	4,656
Arrobas of Nails	17
Mirrors	463
Arrobas of Preserved Meat	47

Value in Pesos Ensayados 2,730,908

Source: Representation of English Items traded in Portobelo, untitled document, 27 February 1719, AGI Contaduría 1507.

failure. The blame of the lack of success can be largely placed on the activities of the English annual ship, the Royal George, that pulled off a "royal one" on Spanish officialdom. The Royal George carried 974 tons of merchandise to the fair, but some 21 other English ships anchored along the coast some miles from Portobelo and conducted a separate--and successful--fair. Moreover, the Royal George was secretly reloaded daily in order to maintain a full stock for Spanish buyers. Because of this, Spanish goods in Portobelo had to be discounted 30 percent before they could be sold, a discount that drove many merchants into
 139
 bankruptcy.

Determined to reinvigorate the old Hapsburg commercial system rather than bringing to bear the seemingly magic wand of Bourbon commercial reform, Philip V ordered Spanish merchants to maintain a steady course--one that again lead to Portobelo in 1723. The Marqués de Grillo commanded the 17 ship fleet that left Cádiz on the last day of 1723; the flota did not arrive in Portobelo until 3 years later, long after Grillo himself had passed away of natural causes. This extended layover in Cartagena gave time for news of an impending fair to travel all over Europe and the New World, so much so that once the enterprise finally did sail on the short trip from Cartagena to Portobelo, the Spanish fleet encountered a sea white with the sails of northern European

ships heading for Panama's shores. The fiasco of 1721 repeated itself in 1726, even to the extent that the Royal George represented official English trading in Portobelo. Again, it is impossible to calculate the amount of goods traded (registered and contraband), though George Dilg, the expert on the fairs of this era, puts the the figure at just ¹⁴⁰ under 10,000,000 pesos.

The year 1730 saw the arrival of the last regular fleet to Portobelo, 20 ships under the command of Manuel López Pintado. The Royal George attended for the third time, as did the assortment of English ships that traded up and down the Panama coast. To be sure, like the other eighteenth-¹⁴¹ century fairs, this one was a disaster. As to the last fair, very little is known about it, indeed most sources do not even list it because the commercial events of 1739 were eclipsed by military ones when Admiral Edward Vernon captured Portobelo and destroyed its forts (see chapter 6). The military destruction of Portobelo dovetailed with the commercial collapse that had been unfolding since the 1650s. Together they provided an excuse to finally abandon the Hapsburg commercial apparatus centered on the Panamanian trajín. Indeed, 1740 marked a major turning point: a truly remarkable epoch in the history of human activities in colonial Spanish America drew to a close.

The New Economy, 1741-1810

After the last fair was celebrated in Portobelo, the role of the isthmus of Panama in the overall Spanish World changed. No longer was there any pretext of supplying Peru by means of organized fleets and commercial fairs. Direct commerce via the Pacific, or indirect trading through Río de la Plata, supplanted Panama as the most efficient (i.e., cheap) routes to the rich southern viceroyalty, and just as this was a period of depression in Panama, it was a boom era for those places that benefited from the redirection of commerce.

All commercial activity in Panama, however, did not stop with the departure of the last great Spanish fleet. The isthmus was still more economically significant than places like Costa Rica or Honduras; much merchandise still was transported via the trajín, and the isthmus still was the principal entry point for English goods shipped through Jamaica to Peru. More importantly, most royal silver was still sent to Spain via Panama—even in the eighteenth century it was the quickest route. But royal silver shipments had never been the backbone of the Panamanian economy: private silver returns, directly tied to the trade routes, dried up in Panama even as torrents of silver flooded the Argentine estuary. To be sure, this was the key aspect of the eighteenth-century economic reorientation. No

matter how much silver the crown chose to channel through Panama, it was never more than a tiny fraction of the treasures of centuries past, and with only local market demands fueling what remained of international commerce, the isthmus entered a period of depression that would not end until the discovery of gold in California in the mid-nineteenth century. The decline in economic significance, however, was not exactly paralleled on the military plane. There was a loss of strategic importance with the collapse of the Hapsburg commercial order, but Panama's role as the doorway to the South Sea was still acknowledged by strategists in Europe, and as the level of international conflict in the Caribbean increased, so too grew Spanish concern about the possible loss of Panama. As discussed in following chapters, Portobelo and Panama City were the sites of massive military construction throughout the eighteenth century.

Fluctuations in the eighteenth-century economy must be measured against the backdrop of imperial warfare in the Caribbean. Of course, European wars accounted for some of the fluctuations in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Panamanian economy, but between Cateau-Cambresis (1556) and Utrecht (1715), the doctrine of "No Peace Beyond the Line" served to level out the impact of changing alliances and belligerencies. To wit, before the eighteenth century, whatever the political situation in Europe, Panama and its

economy were subject to constant violent threats. In the eighteenth century, however, individual, self-sustaining buccaneers gave way to organized fleets backed by the might of nations. Moreover, the Caribbean became a primary focus of contention as northern European powers, for the first time, asserted themselves as Spain's equals in the Americas. The wars of the eighteenth century were these: (1) The War of Jenkins' Ear, or more commonly, The War of Austrian Succession (1739-1748); (2) The Seven Years War (1756-1763); (3) The War of the American Revolution (1775-1783); and (4) The Napoleonic Wars after 1793. These periods of open conflict should be kept in mind when looking at trade data¹⁴² for the eighteenth-century Caribbean.

There is very little data detailing the fluctuation of commerce after 1740. Alfredo Castillero Calvo, however, has put together some statistics for the period 1750-1810, but even so, only the number of ships arriving in Panama City and Portobelo each year is known. Of ships entering the port of Panama, in the decade 1750-1759, an average of 10 ships a year are reported (none for 1753-1755); in the 1760s the average dropped to around 6 ships; in the 1770s the figure rose to over 13 ships per year (20 in 1771); in the 1780s the average was 16 ships yearly; and in the 4 years of 1790s for which data are available (1790-1793), the average stood at almost¹⁴³ 20. The curve of these data clearly indicate a

Table 2-21
Ships Entering Port of Panama

I. 1569-1610

Year	Ships	Year	Ships	Year	Ships	Year	Ships
1569	14	1580	22	1591	24	1601	22
1570	20	1581	24	1592	29	1602	22
1571	-	1582	35	1593	34	1603	17
1572	-	1583	-	1594	23	1604	23
1573	-	1584	27	1595	28	1605	19
1574	-	1585	16	1596	22	1606	28
1575	-	1586	29	1597	38	1607	15
1576	-	1587	25	1598	15	1608	20
1577	-	1588	22	1599	23	1609	27
1578	-	1589	25	1600	27	1610	13
1579	37	1590	31				

II. 1701-1736

Year	Ships	Year	Ships	Year	Ships
1701	8	1726	14	1734	6
1722	22	1732	10	1735	3
1725	2	1733	2	1736	2

Note: No information for years not listed.

Table 2-21 continued

III. 1750-1793

Year	Ships	Year	Ships	Year	Ships	Year	Ships
1750	11	1761	12	1772	14	1783	19
1751	17	1762	13	1773	12	1784	18
1752	11	1763	16	1774	11	1785	18
1753	-	1764	5	1775	12	1786	11
1754	-	1765	-	1776	18	1787	19
1755	-	1766	-	1777	11	1788	15
1756	14	1767	-	1778	11	1789	14
1757	17	1768	-	1779	10	1790	14
1758	15	1769	6	1780	13	1791	23
1759	12	1770	13	1781	12	1792	19
1760	10	1771	20	1782	22	1793	21

Note: dashes indicate no record of arrivals found; could represent zero figures.

Source: Preliminary data presented by Alfredo Castellero Calvo in his paper, "Reflexiones para una historia del comercio y la navegación del período colonial," at the IV Venezuelan Congress of History, Caracas, October 27-31, 1980.

rising trend after 1770. Of shipping into Portobelo, in the 1760s an average of 18 ships arrived yearly; in the 1770s the average was 15; in the 1780s it rose to almost 27 ships each year; in the 1790s falling to just under 13 annual arrivals (low because no ships are reported for 1798-1799); and in the first decade of the nineteenth century, shipping fell to an average of 8.5 ships per year.¹⁴⁴ Thus on the Portobelo end, the rising curve is marred by dips in 1772-1776 and in 1796-1810. The basic thrust of the data, however, indicates general commercial expansion after 1770, a trend which corresponds to a world-wide rise in the economic tide in the last half of the eighteenth century.¹⁴⁵ What is strange, however, is that arrivals seem to have fallen off after the mid-1790s--perhaps the reinvigorated Panamanian economy was a casualty of the growing turbulence in Europe. Insofar as the other great eighteenth-century wars are concerned, there was only slight impact on arrivals on either Panamanian coast. Other areas, such as Cuba and New Spain, however, were drastically impacted upon by these wars (especially in 1763 when Havana itself was captured). In times of peace, however, arrivals at Panama were up (most sharply during the late 1780s).

Economic Cycles in the Panamanian Economy

Now that the yearly fluctuations in the export sector of the Panamanian economy have been identified, it is possible, by

Table 2-22

Shipping into Portobelo, 1761-1810

Year	Ships	Year	Ships	Year	Ships	Year	Ships
1761	17	1774	16	1787	24	1799	-
1762	14	1775	11	1788	25	1800	14
1763	19	1776	15	1789	28	1801	17
1764	19	1777	21	1790	23	1802	14
1765	15	1778	12	1791	22	1803	-
1766	15	1779	8	1792	33	1804	-
1767	23	1780	20	1793	24	1805	10
1768	20	1781	24	1794	20	1806	0
1769	21	1782	35	1795	24	1807	0
1770	18	1783	37	1796	12	1808	20
1771	23	1784	35	1797	13	1809	10
1772	17	1785	20	1798	-	1810	11
1773	14	1786	20				

Source: Lutgardo García Fuentes, El comercio Español con América, (1650-1700), (Sevilla, 1980) pp. 417-420; Preliminary data presented by Alfredo Castellero Calvo in his paper, "Reflexiones para una historia del comercio y la navegación del período colonial," at the IV Venezuelan congress of History, Caracas, October 27-31, 1980.

way of a brief conclusion, to observe the various economic cycles that occurred in colonial Panama. The reader will recall that the traditional economic cycles are the Kitchin (3-4 years), the Juglar (6-8 years), Labrousse or intercycle (12-15 years), the Kuznet (about 20 years), the Kondratieff (50-70 years), and the Secular Trend (100-300 years). It should be noted that except for the Kitchin cycle, these cycles are based on a statistical five year floating average and references to individual years may not correspond to actual events happening in a given specific year. Analysis of the eighteenth century is not attempted, except insofar as the Secular Trend is concerned, because of lack of data. Neither are Juglars or Labrousse cycles identified, as they do not stand out clearly in the data presented.

There is no need to individually identify the shortest of the cycles, the Kitchin, as in even the quickest review of the above presentation the two year cycles stand out sharply. For the period 1564-1616, the Kitchin cycle of an up year followed by a down year--then governed principally by the market demands in Peru--coincided for the most part with a system that brought fleets to Panama every other year. So long as this system dovetailed with the Kitchin pattern, the carrera was essentially sound. After 1616, however, and lasting up until 1640, and again between 1645 and 1654, yearly fairs were held--much to the pleasure of Panamanian arrieros, but to the detriment of the international economy.

Even though fleets were sent every year, Kitchin cycles are still apparent, though towards the middle of the century the market was so depressed that as often as not, down year followed down year after down year. The commercial collapse after the mid-1600s makes the identification of Kitchin cycles still more difficult, though between 1656 and 1682 a two (or three) year cycle characterized the international economy. Too little information exists to analyze the eighteenth century at the Kitchin level.

In general, Kuznet cycles stand out well in the Panama data: 1560-1579 (general rise, breaking in 1571 to a plateau); 1579-1595 (rise, breaking in 1588 to a decline); 1595-1610 (general rise, breaking in 1603 to a less obvious rise); 1610-1628 (gentle rise, breaking in 1619 to a sharp rise); 1628-1640 (sharp decline, breaking in 1634 to a gentle decline); 1640-1656 (rise, breaking in 1645 to sharp decline); 1656-1670 (rise, breaking in 1663 to decline); 1670-1685 (general rise, breaking in 1680 to general decline); 1685-1700 (decline, no breaking point). When these Kuznet cycles are matched against data from Potosí, the general trend (rising, declining, etc.) matches 60 percent of the time, though not agreeing over 1595-1628.

The larger Kondratieff cycles on Panama were 1558-1595 (a long term rise, breaking into an erratic pattern after 1578, though still rising until a sharp decline after 1588);

1596-1640 (a general high plateau until a sharp rise began in 1623, but followed by a significant decline after 1628); 1640-1670 (a series of declines); 1670-1700 (depression).

On the highest level of analysis, the Secular Trend, the year 1628 can clearly be seen as the breakpoint between a century-long rise and a century long decline. Thus the Panamanian manifestation of the great crisis in Spain, which Vicens Vives puts in the early 1620s, occurred about ten years after the peninsula had been hit. More interesting still, however, is that the continued collapse in Spain in the 1640s did not manifest itself in Panama, where during this period a short rebound in trade statistics indicate some improvement occurred in the economy. When this Secular Trend is juxtaposed with Chaunu's cycles in the Atlantic economy (i.e., factoring in the commerce with New Spain and other Caribbean ports), it is seen that again the crisis in Panama came later than that of the Atlantic economy. To wit, Chaunu reports the beginnings of decline in the Atlantic economy as early as 1621. The southern leg of the carrera, however, continued to expand for almost another decade. What this means, as Chaunu has pointed out, is that the Mexican economy was in very poor shape during the early seventeenth century; Peru's (and Panama's), less so.

A second shift in the secular trend is observable in the mid-eighteenth century, though the exact date of the break is not discernible. To wit, the decline that began after 1628

turned around in the 1750s, so much so that the entire last half of the eighteenth century was characterized by limited economic growth. This, like the Secular Trends of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was not shaped by events in Panama, but rather was the isthmian manifestation of forces that determined the direction of the overall world economy.

In retrospect, then, how sound was the Panamanian economy during the colonial era? And, on a broader level, how well did the isthmian *trajín* serve the Spanish Empire? The answer to the second question is more obvious than that to the first. In fact, even though many scholars marvel at the complexity and duration of the *trajín*, never--not even during its heyday--did the Portobelo fair system function well. To illustrate this conclusion, let us review the various reasons for the existence of the Portobelo fairs. First and foremost, the fairs were supposed to serve as the economic link between the Atlantic and Pacific Spanish economies, and though merchants from both Peru and Spain regularly met on the isthmus to effect commercial transactions, the disparate and often conflicting interests of each group prevented the establishment of a system designed for the common good. This is clearly seen in the conflicting aims of the Sevilla and Lima consulados. For example, Sevillian merchants had as their first order of

business the sale of as much merchandise as possible to their New World counterparts. Peruvian merchants, on the other hand, had the difficult task of judging the retail markets in South America. Overextended purchases in a tight market situation could lead to immediate ruin--ruin that might not filter back to Spain for several years. Unfortunately, it was usually crown policy to support Spanish merchants in their quest for larger sales, and frequently the Peruvians were stuck with merchandise they had no chance of successfully retailing. It was in part to reconcile these conflicting interests that Peruleros themselves set up shop in Sevilla and Cádiz, joining northern European merchants as the Spanish mercantile establishment looked on in anger.

Aside from the conflicts between New and Old World merchants, the Panama route represented a costly burden insofar as transportation costs were concerned. This was not just a function of distance. To be sure, the 50-mile trajín across Panama was a very expensive venture what with Panamanian monopolies on mules, housing, and other support industries. Moreover, avería rates, at first willingly paid for needed defense, became an intolerable, though apparently necessary cost, forcing the price of goods well above reasonable limits. In the end, Spanish goods that reached Peru were so expensive--and in many instances, unnecessary--that commercial firms often were unable to effect sales even to receptive consumers.

Another function of the fairs (and of the carrera as a whole) was to maintain a Spanish monopoly on Indies commerce. Instead of this, the monopoly system was blown wide open by Spaniard and northern European alike. Hardly any fair went by without massive fraud. After all, the incentives to smuggle were very strong. Indeed, the entire commercial system was seemingly geared to punish honest merchants while rewarding illicit adventures. For example, undeclared silver and merchandise was subject to neither costly *avería*, *alcavala*, and *almojarifazgo* taxes, nor to unpredictable crown sequestration upon return to Spain. Moreover, and especially as growing numbers of crown officials were drawn into the contraband network (especially at the Portobelo fair), it became difficult to conduct even superficial business without payoffs, bribes, and a host of other expensive illicit palm-greasings. In addition to contraband within a context of the carrera superstructure that saw French, English, Dutch, Portuguese, and Italian merchants virtually running the docks in Sevilla, the inability of the system to properly supply the American colonies with cheap European goods guaranteed continued smuggling operations from Jamaica, Sacramento, Curacao, and other non-Spanish staging grounds. In short, as a component of the monopoly system, the *trafín* and fairs of Panama failed completely.

Tied closely to the role of serving as a keystone of the monopoly system was the Portobelo fair's role as a bullion

exchange center. Indeed, great amounts of silver were traded through Portobelo in both registered and unregistered canvas bags. Smuggled or not, silver from the Portobelo fair, together with silver simply brought across Panama, served to fuel the engine of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European economies. Sadly, however, Spain itself saw only a fraction of this wealth--especially after the end of the sixteenth century--because the ports on the Spanish end of the carrera were little more than funnels that channeled bullion to more northerly destinations. After the mid-sixteenth century, Panama's role in the bullion trade diminished as more and more silver remained in the Indies, and as what was shipped out began to flow along other, less complicated routes. Even so, as a bullion exchange center, Portobelo and Panama performed nearly as expected for the greater part of the colonial era.

Taken as a whole, then, Portobelo and Panama frequently failed in the multifaceted economic task it had been assigned by the Spanish crown. Given this conclusion, however, one must consider for a moment what other options Hapsburg Spain had at its disposal that might have led to a better, more pro-Spanish commercial system. Not only do no better routes come to mind, but suddenly Panama's advantages stand in bright contrast against the gloomy picture painted in the preceding paragraphs. For example, of the three possible

alternatives to the Panama route, two have fundamental flaws, while the third would have resulted in a Panama-like situation all over again. To wit, the most probable alternatives to the isthmian trajín were (1) direct trade with Peru via the Mar del Sur and (2) a commercial network based based in Río de la Plata. Direct trade with Peru was virtually impossible for several reasons, not the least of which was the fact that before the eighteenth century, ship design and construction had not advanced to the point that regular safe transit around Cape Horn could be guaranteed. Moreover, the time it took to sail from Sevilla to Callao was far longer than the time taken on the Panama route. The second alternative, the Buenos Aires-Tucuman-Upper Peru route, also had two distinct disadvantages. The most obvious was the great land distance to be covered between Potosí and the Atlantic coast. Such overland trade was very expensive and difficult to protect. A greater drawback, however, was the difficulty of maritime defense on the Buenos Aires-Sevilla leg. Not only was the distance much greater than the Sevilla-Portobelo route, it also ran for several thousand miles along the Brazilian coast, and with Portugal more often than not aligned with Spain's enemies (and when it was not, the Dutch controlled Bahia), this represented an intolerable risk. The financial burden of equipping defense escorts for flotas to Río de la Plata were prohibitive. Indeed, one of the great advantages of Panama was that the fleets to Panama

and New Spain could sail together, providing for common defense.

The third alternative to the Panama trajín was the Nicaragua route. If the transisthmian trade had been redirected through Nicaragua, however, nothing would be gained over Panama, and in fact, the considerable advantage of the short land trail across Panama would have been forfeited not only for a more difficult overland route, but also for a longer sailing trip to Peru. There was, therefore, little the Spanish crown could do but use Panama and cast the best possible light on an admittedly bad situation.

But the Empire's loss was Panama's gain—or was it? Panama, of course, directly benefited from trajín activities, indeed without the frequent arrivals of merchants from distant Spain and Peru, the isthmus would have been little more than the most poverty-stricken backwater in the Spanish New World. There were no resources either in mineral or human terms to exploit, and thus few enticements for prospective colonists. Where geology had short-changed Panama, however, geography was generous, but the gift of narrowness led to a service-sector dependency that remained long after the colonial era had ended. Perhaps not exactly fitting the Barbara and Stanley Stein model, Panama's reliance on economic fluctuations abroad made for a most

fickle form of dependency. Peru or Mexico, if ever really dependent at all after the conquest era, had only to deal with the single variable of the Spanish commercial situation; Panama's profits, however, were dictated by economic variables in both Spain and Peru. When either one failed, Panama stagnated. Being one of the Empire's commercial centers had its drawbacks, but in balance Panama's greatness had this as its only foundation.

Thus, during much of the colonial era--from at least 1540 to 1740--Panama was of prime importance in the commercial scheme of the Hispanic World Empire. It was this commercial role, more than anything else, that shaped colonial isthmian history, and it was this that made Panama a place of vital strategic significance in the competition for empire.

Notes

1

Braudel, The Perspective of the World, p. 71.

2

Immanuel Wallerstein, The Modern World System II, pp. 12-35. Also see Braudel, "L'économie française au XVII^e siècle," Annales E.S.C. 6:1 (1951) pp. 65-71 and F. L. Carsten, "Was There an Economic Decline in Germany Before the 30 Years War?," English Historical Review 71:279 (1956) pp. 240-247..

3

The bibliography on this theme is extensive, but a few exceptional studies stand out. The original thought piece that stirred the seventeenth century question into a

controversy for Latin Americanists was Woodrow Borah's New Spain's Century of Depression (Berkeley, 1951). Arguing for the opponents of the depression thesis is Richard Boyer in his article "Mexico in the Seventeenth Century: Transition of a Colonial Society," HAHR 57:3 (1977) pp. 455-478. In his two volume history of Hapsburg Spain John Lynch has demonstrated the imperial implications of the anti-depression thesis, especially in his second volume, pp. 184-193. He summarizes the reorientation argument on page 193: "It is tempting to attribute the great depression of the American trade to the collapse of the colonial economies. But it was a consequence of shift rather than collapse. If the colonies no longer fed the trade as of old, it was largely because they were employing their capital at home, in public and private investment. More than this, they even absorbed Spanish and European capital. By the 1640s more and more merchants were leaving their bullion returns in America, especially in Peru, either as loans or investments, thus avoiding the risk of sequestration in Spain." Spain Under the Habsburgs II. Also see Lyle N. McAlister Spain and Portugal in the New World, 1492-1700 (Minneapolis, 1984) p. 381, "As the Spanish mercantile system decayed, Mexico City replaced Seville as the metropolis of the Indies because it held the largest accumulation of commercial capital in the New World. . . ."

4

Huguette and Pierre Chaunu, Séville et l'Atlantique, especially see vol. vi, parts 2-5.

5

Lutgardo García Fuentes, El comercio español con América, 1650-1700.

6

Antonio García-Baquero González, Cádiz y el Atlántico (1717-1778) 2 vols. (Sevilla, 1976). In his second volume García-Baquero presents Chaunu-like tables and charts detailing each voyage between Spain and the colonies--material that would have been of direct use in this study but for one singular problem: in the reporting of ships and tonnages traveling to the New World, the author has not separated vessels bound for Panama from those bound for Tierra Firme in general. Commercial activity in Venezuela and New Granada no doubt accounts for most of the tonnage in the Tierra Firme figures. A paper given by Alfredo Castellero Calvo at the Fourth Venezuelan Congress of History (October 27-31, 1980), however, fills in some figures for the eighteenth century, "Reflexiones para una historia del comercio y la navegación del período colonial."

7

George Dilg, "The Collapse of the Portobelo Fairs"; Celestino Andrés Arauz, "El contrabando en el Istmo de Panamá y la Nueva Granada, una de las causas del colapso de las ferias en Tierra Firme (1700-1731)," Revista Lotería 342-343 (1984) pp. 90-127.

8

Enriqueta Vila Vilar, "Las Ferias de Portobelo"; Manuel Moreyra y Paz-Soldán, Estudios sobre el tráfico marítimo en la e'poca colonial (Lima, 1944). Useful essays included are: "El comercio de exportación en el Pacífico a comienzos del siglo XVIII"; "El ilusorio monopolio comercial de flotas y galeones y la decadencia de España"; "Portobelo y la travesía del istmo en la e'poca colonial"; and a very helpful, though often contradicted by Chaunu, "Relación de las armadas a Tierra Firme."

9

I refer to my forthcoming research monograph on colonial shipping into Fernandina in North Florida, to be published as the second in the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History's monograph series as East Florida During the Embargo, 1806-1812: The Quantities of Semi-illicit Commerce.

10

Vila Vilar, p. 61; Chaunu, Séville et l'Atlantique, 6-4, p. 555;

11

Moreyra y Paz-Soldán, p. 74; Vila Vilar, pp. 51, 71.

12

Vila Vilar, pp. 51-53.

13

This point was made in regard to Earl Hamilton's reports of silver imports in Jaime Vicens Vives, An Economic History of Spain, p. 324; Earl J. Hamilton, American Treasure and the Price Revolution in Spain.

14

See Pierre and Huguette Chaunu, "The Atlantic Economy and the World Economy," in Essays in European Economic History, 1500-1800, Peter Earle, ed., (Oxford, 1974) pp. 113-126, especially p. 116.

15

Little information is available on this problem other than that reported in Haring, Trade and Navigation, pp. 215-16. Also see Lynch, vol. ii, 164-167.

- 16 The standard regression formula was used.
- 17 Braudel, Perspective of the World, vol. iii, pp. 72-73.
- 18 Vicens Vives., pp. 456-467. Henry Kamen has offered an amendment to this chronology--he dates the period of recovery to the early 1680s.
- 19 Chaunu, "The Atlantic Economy."
- 20 This summary comes from Braudel, Perspective of the World, vol. iii, p. 72; Also see W.W. Rostow, "Kondratieff, Schumpeter, and Kutznets: Trend Periods Revisited," The Journal of Economic History 13 (1975) pp. 719-753.
- 21 Se'ville et l'Atlantique, 6-1, p. 30.
- 22 This fleet was organized in response to French corsair activity in and around Panama in 1536. Indeed, in 1537 the fleet itself had trouble with pirates. Regarding the size of the flota, Chaunu does not give total tonnage, Séville et l'Atlantique, 6-2 p. 280-283; also see Haring, Trade and Navigation, p. 232.
- 23 The value is reported in Moreyra y Paz-Soldán, p. 69; the number of ships and tonnage in Chaunu, 6-2 pp. 334-339.
- 24 The value is calculated on the basis of almojarifazgo payments of 6,558 pesos, 5% of the total value of fifteen of the ships of the convoy. No doubt the actual value was substantially higher. See Chaunu, 6-2, pp. 348-357, especially 355.
- 25 For the years after 1545 the accounts of the caja real of Panama City reveal interesting information regarding the value of ships arriving on the north coast. Value figures for 1545 come from AGI Contaduría 1452, accounts for 1545. See Chaunu 6-2, pp. 373-381.

26

Other statistics for 1547 have not been found. See AGI Contaduría 1452, accounts for 1548 and 1549 for almojarifazgo taxes collected; see Chaunu 6-2 pp. 412-437.

27

Information on these fleets is contradictory. Moreyra y Paz-Soldán (p. 69) reports Sancho de Viedma as Captain General, while Chaunu gives the names Sancho de Viedma and Hernando Blas (Chaunu 6-2 p. 448-449). The value figure comes from Moreyra y Paz-Soldán and only refers to the first flota. On the return voyage a ship was lost in a storm, though its silver was salvaged. See Chaunu 6-2 pp. 474-481.

28

Chaunu 6-2 pp. 462-73; Moreyra y Paz-Soldán, p. 69. According to Chaunu, even though fleets were making regular sailings by this time, many ships still sailed individually to the Indies. Given the irregular arrival resulting from such practices, the fairs in these early years represented more of a concentration of activity, but trading and commerce continued at other times as well. The formal, rigid structures would not be imposed until the time of Menéndez.

29

Miraculously, one of the survivors from the Capitana which sank in the storm was Carreño himself, one of only 23 men saved from the sinking ship. The value reported here comes from Moreyra y Paz-Soldán, the Contaduría legajos from these years silent on the subject. Though Chaunu puts the number of ships arriving at 32, Moreyra y Paz-Soldán says only 24 ships entered Nombre de Dios that year (p. 70). Chaunu's data is to be found in 6-2 pp. 482-488. He reports that again the threat of French corsairs was the dominant theme throughout the period of the fair.

30

The value is based on a 5% almojarifazgo tax total of 54,406 pesos (AGI Contaduría 1453, caja real accounts for 1553--dated 1554). Tonnage data is reported in Chaunu 6-2 pp. 496-503

31

The Tierra Firme fleet of 1555 sailed from Spain in conjunction with Pedro Menéndez de Avilés' fleet to New Spain. The combined fleet numbered 65 ships. The Tierra Firme-bound vessels totaled 10,520 tons. Not all the ships arrived in Nombre de Dios at the same time. The bulk of the armada arrived on January 28, but seven additional ships came in early March. See Chaunu 6-2 pp. 520-529. Value of fair comes from AGI Contaduría 1453, caja real accounts for 1556.

32

Little is known about this fleet, though it is mentioned briefly by Chaunu (6-2 p. 538).

33

Again, values are calculated from almojarifazgo returns of 37,383 pesos and 26,062 pesos respectively (AGI Contaduría 1453, accounts of the caja real for 1557-58). With regard to the number of ships composing the second flota, Chaunu reports 11 (6-2 pp. 550-557) while Moreyra y Paz-Soldán reports 19 (p. 71). For purposes of calculating tonnage, the Chaunu figure has been used. Both fleets had substantial numbers of warships for escort.

34

No value has been found for the 1558 fair. The figure 717,460 pesos given for 1559-60 is based on an almojarifazgo take amounting to 35,873 pesos (AGI Contaduría 1453, accounts of the caja real of Panama, 1560). Information on tonnage comes from Chaunu, 6-2 pp. 562-81.

35

The fleet sailed early in the year in company with the New Spain fleet. See Chaunu 6-2 pp. 584-87. Also see letter of Ortega de Melgoza to the Casa de Contratación, Nombre de Dios, 18 May 1560, AGI Contratación 5104. Some information is contained in José Antonio de Lavalle, Galería de retratos de los gobernantes y virreyes (Lima, 1891) vol. ii, p. 526.

36

Other than the fact that the fleet sailed in conjunction with the New Spain fleet of the same year (leaving Seville on 27 February), little is known about the convoy. Brief information is given in Chaunu 6-3 pp. 6-9.

37

The value is fixed at 1,915,000 pesos from almojarifazgo receipts of 95,796 pesos (AGI Contaduría 1453, accounts of the caja real of Panama, 1562). Tonnage information is found in Chaunu 6-3 pp. 22-31, and Moreyra y Paz-Soldán p. 70. The fleet wintered in Havana.

38

Details of the disastrous fair of 1563 are found in Chaunu 6-3 pp. 36-41, 64. The value of merchandise is found in AGI Contaduría 1453, accounts of the caja real of Panama, 1563-64. The harbor at Nombre de Dios was so bad that McAlister mistakenly writes that it was actually an open roadstead (Spain and Portugal in the New World, p. 363).

39

Basic information on this fleet can be found in Moreyra y Paz-Soldán, pp. 70-71 and Chaunu 3-6, pp. 52-79. Documentary evidence cited regarding the success of the fair is letter of Estevan de las Alas to the Casa de Contratación (1564?) in AGI Contratación 5105. Value of the fair is reported in AGI Contaduría 1453, accounts of the caja real of Panama, 1564.

40

The almojarifazgo values come from the accounts of the caja real of Panama, 1566 AGI Contaduría 1453. Shipping information is found in Moreyra y Paz-Soldán, p. 70-71 and Chaunu 6-3, pp. 70-74. The fair is mentioned without detail in Levillier, vol. iii, p. 198.

41

Chaunu 6-3, pp. 98-103; accounts of the caja real of Panama, 1567, AGI Contaduría 1459. This year marked an important point in Panamanian fiscal history in that the almojarifazgo was raised from 5% to 10%.

42

The return voyage was menaced by corsairs. Chaunu points out that this was the first fleet functioning under the new mercantile organization (6-3, pp. 128-135). Moreyra y Paz-Soldán makes mention of the fleet (p. 72), though he relates little information. Value data is found in accounts of the caja real of Panama, 1569-70 AGI Contaduría 1453.

43

Chaunu reports that the main significance of this fleet was in the fine tuning of the commercial reorganization of the previous years that occurred in its preparation.

44

See Chaunu 6-3, pp. 140-149; accounts of the caja real of Panama, 1571 AGI Contaduría 1453.

45

Both fleets are briefly described in Chaunu 6-3 pp. 166-177.

46

Three merchant ships bound for Cartagena sailed with Valdéz (Chaunu 6-3, pp. 194-195).

47

Information on the second flota of 1574 is in Chaunu 6-3, pp. 196-199.

48

Chaunu reports that the slowdown resulted principally from a saturation of the Peruvian market. The fleet consisted of three galleons and one merchant vessel, the four totaling 2,100 tons. See Chaunu 6-3, pp. 210-211.

49

The commentary by Capitán General Luxán is contained in his letter to the Casa de Contratación dated in Nombre de Dios 23 June 1576, AGI Contratación 5101. Tonnage information about both fleets is in Chaunu 6-3, pp. 220-224.

50

Letter of Juan Velasco de Barrio to the Casa de Contratación, Nombre de Dios 25 February 1578, AGI Contratación 5101. Tonnage reports are from Chaunu 6-3, 238-39.

51

Two ships bound for Florida also accompanied the flota when it sailed from Spain. Tonnages are given in Chaunu 6-2, pp. 250-251 and Moreyra y Paz-Soldán, p.71. More information on the guarda costa squadron is available in Paul Hoffman, The Spanish Crown and the Defense of the Caribbean, 1535-1585 (Baton Rouge, 1980) pp. 179-195.

52

See Chaunu 6-3, pp. 262-263, 288. The big topic of discussion on the isthmus that year was Drake's penetration of the Pacific and his activity off Panama City. The English privateer did not linger long in Panamanian waters, however, instead sailing north toward California.

53

Chaunu 6-3, pp. 276-280, 304. Over 4,500,000 pesos in silver eventually arrived from Peru. This figure 4,500,000 pesos is misleading. Almost each fleet carried at least this much silver back to Spain, but only a fraction--perhaps 500,000 pesos--was actually and officially traded at the fair. Accordingly, the "value" figure given for the flotas in this study do not represent total silver remittances to Europe.

54

See Chaunu 6-3, pp. 306-312; 317-318; 336. Almojarifazgo receipts were 296,456 pesos (accounts of the caja real of Panama, 1582, AGI Contaduría 1453).

55

Francisco de Novoa Feijo to the Casa de Contratación, Nombre de Dios 2 April 1584, AGI Contratación 5107; also see Adolfo Navarretta, Historia marítima militar de España

(Madrid, 1907) vol. i, p. 482. Also see Chaunu 6-3, pp. 340-41. Chaunu comments upon the success of the fair on page 346. One of the best discussions of Portuguese infiltration of the carrera's American end is Harry E. Cross, "Commerce and Orthodoxy." Also see Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, "La concesión de 'naturalezas para comerciar en Indias' durante el siglo XVII," Revista de Indias 9:76 (1959). Overland contraband commerce controlled by the Portuguese is discussed in Marie Helmer, "Comércio y contrabando entre Bahia e Potosí no século XVI," Revista de Historia 4 (1953) pp. 195-212.

56

See Chaunu 6-3, pp. 344-349; Haring, Trade and Navigation p. 212; and Moreyra y Paz-Soldán, p. 71.

57

Unfortunately no financial figures have been found relating to the commerce of 1586-87. The size of the fleet and the success enjoyed by fairs during the rest of the decade, however, give sure indication of a crowning success. The actual size of the fleet may have been as high as 85 ships if one goes by the figures Moreyra y Paz-Soldán reports (p. 73), a figure repeated by Haring (Trade and Navigation p. 212). Chaunu's information is found in 6-3, pp. 378-387. Peter Bradley reports the Armada del Sur of 1587 consisted of six ships, two of which were galleons. See his "Maritime Defense of the Viceroyalty of Peru, 1600-1700," The Americas 36:2 (1979) p. 156.

58

Though the Tierra Firme fleet was incorporated into the Invincible Armada, the New Spain fleet sailed as usual. See Chaunu 6-3, pp. 412-413.

59

The usual sources disagree as to the size of the fleet. The figures quoted are Chaunu's (6-3, pp. 428-431), but Haring (Trade and Navigation p. 212) and Moreyra y Paz-Soldán (p. 73) claim 94 ships entered Nombre de Dios that year. The total number of ships, whatever final figure used, was inflated by the inclusion of a dozen small 80 ton vessels of a type infrequently used in transatlantic commerce (Chaunu 6-3, pp. 430-431).

60

The incident of the 1590 storms is mentioned in Moreyra y Paz-Soldán, p. 73; shipping figures are reported by Chaunu in 6-3, pp. 450-469. The 1590-91 trade cycle saw a large fleet sent to New Spain, to the detriment of Panama: in the aftermath of the Armada disaster the crown simply did not have the resources to outfit two full fleets.

61

Moreyra y Paz-Soldán writes that the flota was made up of 72 ships (p. 73); Chaunu 6-3, pp. 488-491.

62

Haring (Trade and Navigation p. 146).

63

Vila Vilar, p. 49; the value of the fair also comes from this source, same page. Haring (Trade and Navigation, p. 212) gives the total number of ships as 56. See Chaunu 6-3, pp. 526-529. Useful data on the fleet itself can be found in an informative letter from Rodrigo de Soto to the crown, Nombre de Dios 18 May 1594, AGI Contratación 5110.

64

A discussion of the move to Portobelo is presented at length in the next chapter. Tonnage data for 1596 come from Chaunu 6-4, pp. 8-10. Additional information on the role of Eraso in restoring order to Panama is held in a letter sent by Bernardino del Gadillo de Avellaneda to Juan de Ibarra, Nombre de Dios 9 May 1596 AGI Contratación 5189.

65

Values provided by Vila Vilar, p. 51, other information by Chaunu 6-4, p. 50-55. The delays in getting the fleet off are detailed in Chaunu 6-4, p. 59 and Casa de Contratación to the King, Seville 28 May 1597 AGI Contratación 5170.

66

The flota sailed in conjunction with the New Spain fleet. The reports of merchants refusing to load goods comes from Vicens Vives, p. 401; value of the flota is found in the accounts of the caja real of Panama, 1599 AGI Contaduría 1470. Strangely, Vila Vilar omits the 1599 flota from her list on p. 51. Also see Chaunu 6-4, pp. 74-75; 86-87.

67

Sources, including Chaunu, provide little information of the Armada de la Guardia of 1600. What is available can be found in Chaunu 6-4, pp. 92-98.

68

Vila Vilar, p. 49; for total value of the flota see p. 51. the estimate of the value of unregistered goods is also from this source. Chaunu's tonnage figures are in 6-4, pp. 112-117.

69

Chaunu 6-4, pp. 134-135.

70

See Haring, Trade and Navigation p. 152. Tonnage totals are in Chaunu 6-4, p. 158; value figures from Vila Vilar p. 51. Vila Vilar estimates the rate of fraud at 50 percent.

71

Of the 9,107 tons that entered Portobelo in 1605, 3477 represented the 9 warships of the escort squadron. Value of the fair and estimate of fraud is found in Vila Vilar, p. 51; tonnages for 1604 in Chaunu 6-4, pp. 170-171; for 1605 on pp. 184-185. The fleet suffered severe losses on the return voyage when four galleons sank in storms. In a letter to the king, Governor Valverdi estimated that one-fourth of all goods exchanged that year were unregistered. A letter sent to Spain on the 1604 Armada de la Guardia cited one problem limiting the success of the fairs as trade between Mexico and Peru, which, according to the author, robbed the carrera of 1,600,000 pesos of capital that year alone. (López de Salazar to the King, 11 July 1604, AGI Panamá 15; also see Audiencia of Panama to the King, 6 August 1605, AGI Panamá 15).

72

Both Chaunu (6-4, pp. 232-233) and Haring (Trade and Navigation p. 213) make mention of the state of the market in Peru. A three year decline in Peruvian silver production may have impacted on commercial activity. See D. A. Brading and Harry Cross, "Colonial Silver Mining: Mexico and Peru," HAHR 52:4 545-579 (1972) especially p. 569. The slowdown in metallic production was, however, slight--indeed Potosí produced well over 2,400,000 pesos in the period 1605-1607 (Haring Trade and Navigation pp. 333-335). Tonnage information for both fleets is in Chaunu 6-4 pp. 204-205 and 228-229. A general discussion of the Potosí production is found in Bakewell's "Registered Silver Production in the Potosí District, 1550-1735," Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas 12 (1975) pp. 67-103.

73

Lynch reports a total of 202 sailings to the Americas for the year, well above average even considering the commercial strength of the New Spain leg of the carrera. He writes, "Indeed 1608 was a flash of lightning out of surrounding gloom. . . ." (Spain Under the Habsburgs vol. ii, p. 187). Fiscal data for the fair is found in both Vila Vilar p. 51 and Cuentas de 1608, caja real of Panama, AGI Contaduría 1474. Also see Chaunu 6-4 pp. 248-251 for specific tonnage information. Fraud at the fair is discussed in letter of Bartholomé de Morquecho to the King, 1608, AGI Panamá 15.

74

See report of Lope Díaz de Armendariz, Portobelo 1609, AGI Contratación 2899. The arrival of so many soldiers brought chaos to Portobelo. The audiencia complained to the crown that because everyone was armed it was impossible to keep any sense of order in the city. Indeed, numerous reports of pilfering and of sexual violations of black slaves led officials to write that the arrival of the fleet was like an "invasion of barbarians" (Chaunu 6-4 p. 288).

The high expectations of some merchants involved in the Indies commerce of 1609 led to overextensions that resulted in several significant bankruptcies in Seville. The 1609 fleet, however, brought back a great number of "peruleros" that quickly moved into the void, signaling an event of some mean importance in the story of the carrera. From now on New World merchants represented themselves in Spain, eliminating many of the Spanish merchants who had dominated the European end of the enterprise. An excellent discussion of the perulero invasion can be found in Vila Vilar, pp. 56-61. Tonnage data for 1609 is in Chaunu 6-4 pp. 278-279.

75

The document referred to is a letter of Juan de la Cueva y Mendoza to the crown, dated in Cartagena 15 April 1610, AGI Contratación 5113; also see Chaunu 6-4 p. 314. Value of the flota, fraud, and tonnages are given by Vila Vilar, p. 51. Interestingly enough, Haring writes that the flota sailed into Cádiz on the return voyage, but was ordered to sail immediately to Seville without unloading any cargo. Frequently customs officials of other Spanish ports were less strict in enforcing registration procedures. Perhaps Cueva y Mendoza was up to something? (Trade and Navigation p. 14).

76

An excellent summary of the events of this voyage may be found in a letter from the Capitán General to the Casa de Contratación, Havana 4 October 1611, AGI Contratación 5113. Chaunu reports tonnages in 6-4 pp. 338-339.

77

See Vila Vilar p. 51 and Chaunu 6-4 p. 372.

78

The report of Calatayud is summarized in Chaunu 6-4 p. 397. Other information for this year is presented in the same volume, pp. 386-387 and 394-397. The Portuguese had expanded their role in the isthmian economy since 1580. One important Portuguese merchant, João Rodrigues Coutinho, actually lived in Panama City, from which place he administered the Asiento that at that time permitted the importation of 3,500 slaves

per year (Cross, "Commerce and Orthodoxy," p. 154). By the first decades of the seventeenth century, however, Portuguese merchants preferred the Río de la Plata route over the Panama route to Peru--not only because of the proximity of Sacramento and other Portuguese staging grounds near Buenos Aires, but also because the enforcement of Spanish commercial laws was even less rigorous in Río de la Plata than in Portobelo (see Raúl A. Molina, Las primeras experiencias comerciales del Plata: El comercio marítimo, 1580-1700, (Buenos Aires, 1966) pp. 146-150. The eventual expulsion of the Portuguese was because they were suspected Jews. This may also be part of the reason for their disappearance from Panama.

79

An interesting event occurred on the flota's return to Spain when the fleet silver master, Estevan de Arce, made off with a large part of the private treasure (Hamilton, American Treasure and the Price Revolution in Spain p. 24). Crown income was hit hard this year because of the loss of seven ships of the New Spain fleet off the coast of Campeche. Fraud, value, and tonnage figures are given in Vila Vilar p. 51; Chaunu, however, reports only 14 ships instead of Vila Vilar's 15 (6-4 p. 410-411).

80

See Chaunu 6-4 pp. 432-433. In 1615 the commander of the Armada del Sur, the Marqués de Montesclavos, was forced to divide his meagre forces into two divisions, one to carry the silver to Panama, the other to patrol the South Sea against a reported invasion by a Dutch Fleet (Bradley, "Maritime Defense of the Viceroyalty of Peru," p. 157).

81

All figures come from Vila Vilar, p. 51 and Chaunu 6-4 pp. 436-37, 443. Details of the Armada del Sur for this year are in Marie Helmer, "Le Callao (1615-1618)," Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft, und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas (1965), pp. 145-195, especially pp. 174-177.

82

Order of 4 January 1616, AGI Contratación 5172.

83

Ironically, 1617 was a year of decline at Potosí, the amount of the royal quinto falling to under 700,000 pesos (Haring, Trade and Navigation pp. 333-335. Statistics describing the 1617 fleet comes from Vila Vilar p. 51.

84

Statistics are from Vila Vilar p. 51 and Chaunu 6-4 pp. 500-501; Moreyra y Paz-Soldán, p. 73; Marqués de Cadereyta to Casa de Contratación, (Havana ?) 24 November 1618, AGI Contratación 5115.

85

The value of the flota figured on the basis of avería statistics is only 276,986 pesos (Vila Vilar p. 51); also see Chaunu 6-4 p. 555. The drought is described in a letter from the Capitán General to the Casa de Contratación of 10 November 1619, AGI Contratación 5115. Chaunu writes of the root cause of the depression seen at this fair as follows: "It is not the lowering of silver production that was responsible for the fall in commerce between Seville and Panama, but rather commerce with China," (6-4 p. 542). His reasoning is unclear. The crisis in the commercial system between Spain and Peru was not an issue of availability of silver. The principal variable was the saturation of the Peruvian market with Spanish goods--Peruvian merchants could always afford to buy whatever they wanted, but they were reluctant to buy more than was needed. To be sure, the consulado did not react to the poor showing at the 1619 fair with complaints about silver shortages. Instead the advice offered the Casa de Contratación was to reduce the size of the annual fleets (Chaunu 6-4 p. 526-527).

86

This quote comes from a report of Juan López de Carnicares to the crown, 6 July 1620, AGI Contratación 5116. For general information on the fleet see Vila Vilar p. 51; Chaunu 7, 86; Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs ii, p. 165.

87

Report of royal officials in Portobelo to the crown, 7 July 1620, AGI Contratación 5116. One estimate put the value of illicit goods traded at 400,00 pesos (Letter of Juan de Vivero to the King, 1622, AGI Panamá 17).

88

See Vila Vilar, p. 51; Chaunu 6-5 pp. 6-14.

89

Chaunu 6-5, p. 34; Also see 6-5 pp. 26-27; Vila Vilar, p. 51; Casa de Contratación to Juan Núñez, 2 August 1622, AGI Contratación 5189; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 74; and Marqués de Cadereyta to the Casa de Contratación, 12 December 1622, AGI Contratación 5166. The account of the return voyage is related in Diego Pinelo to Casa de Contratación, 26 August 1623 AGI Contratación 5116.

90

Not much is reported about this fleet. See Chaunu 6-5, pp. 44-45, 54.

91

See Chaunu 6-5, pp. 88-89; Vila Vilar, pp. 51, 71; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 74. The comment about the Flota being too large comes from Tomás de la Raspurú to the Consejo, 11 October 1624, AGI Indiferente General 2665. On the return voyage three galleons were lost in storms, robbing the crown of much of the profit from the 1624 fair (Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs, ii, pp. 174. Also see, Oficiales Reales to the King, Portobelo, 10 July 1624, AGI Panamá 34a.

92

Information for 1625 is found in both Chaunu 6-5, pp. 96-97 and in Lynch Spain Under the Hapsburgs ii, p. 174. The English attack on Cádiz is described in detail in "Relacion de lo sucedido en Cadiz con la venida de la Armada de Inglaterra," 10 March 1626 AGI Contratación 5189. The value of crown revenue (which was reduced when three galleons sank in storms) is found in "Registro de la Flota," 30 November 1625, AGI Contratación 5189.

93

General information on 1626 is found in Chaunu 6-5, p. 131 and Vila Vilar, p. 51. The 3,500,000 figure comes from Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 75; Oficiales Reales to the Casa de Contratación, 11 June 1626, AGI Contratación 5117.

94

Chaunu 6-5, pp. 134-137; Chaunu used a document entitled "Sobre los Galeones que este año de ir por la plata," 5 January 1627, AGI Contratación 5173.

95

See Chaunu 6-5, pp. 152-157 and Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 75. AGI Contratación 5189 again yields some information in Casa de Contratación to Don Luis Velasco, 10 April 1629 (the fleet wintered in Havana).

96

Contrary to the lack of information about the previous two years, 1629 is well documented. Secondary sources include Chaunu 6-5, pp. 170-173 and Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs, ii, p. 165 where it is noted that the crown sequestered over 1,000,000 ducats of the private treasure to finance the failing war effort. The reference to 8,000,000 pesos is in a Chaunu note, 6-5 p. 202. Jaime Vicens Vives, An Economic History of Spain, mentions the unwillingness of the Sevillian merchants to participate in such a large fair (p. 401).

Useful informatin is also contained in Casa de Contratación to the Conde de la Puebla, 2 August 1629, AGI Contratación 5189.

97

See Vila Vilar, p. 53 and Chaunu 6-5, pp. 184-189. The problem of the Dutch in Pernambuco as it related to the Tierra Firme fleets is discussed in Chaunu 6-5, p. 190. Silver returns of the 1630 fleet are to be found in "Registros de Plata, 1630," AGI Contratación 2900, together with the general registeries of the Indies fleets presented in Chaunu. In one report dating from this year, the Conde de Chincón, who then served as Viceroy of Peru, complained of the problems resulting from yearly sailings, arguing for flotas every two years instead. Nothing, however, came of this proposal.

98

Chaunu 6-5, pp. 204-207; Vila Vilar, p. 53; Also see Casa de Contratación to Don Gaspar de Vargas, 22 May 1631, AGI Contratación 5189 and "Instrucciones de Tomás de la Raspurí. . . para navegacion y combate de la misma," AGI Contratación 5173.

99

Chaunu 6-5 pp. 216-217. Of the 14 ships, 3 were Portuguese galleons that transported 7,000 quintales of mercury for the Peruvian mines. Production at Potosí by this time had fallen to about 500,000 pesos a year (Haring, Trade and Navigation, pp. 333-335.

100

Chaunu 6-5, pp. 230-241; Vila Vilar, p. 53; Simón Enríquez to the Casa de Contratación, 21 February 1634, AGI Contratación 5177. Prices at the fair, however, were very high because one ship carrying products from Peru, the Nuestra Señora del Rosario, sank in a storm.

101

Chaunu 6-5, pp. 248-251; Vila Vilar, p. 53.

102

Chaunu 6-5, pp. 264-267; Vila Vilar, p. 53; Casa de Contratación to Consejo de Indias, 9 August 1634, AGI Contratación 5189 (regarding division of cargo space between Sevilla and Cádiz).

103

Vila Vilar, p. 53; Chaunu 6-5, pp. 286-289. The sequestration is mentioned in Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs, ii p. 165.

104

Chaunu 6-5, pp. 308-313; Vila Vilar, pp. 51-53. A second value for the worth of the fair based on alcabala computations rather than almojarifazgo returns results in a figure of 297,850 pesos (Vila Vilar p. 53), which if true makes my own comment about Gage's observations an understatement. For the Gage material see Thomas Gage, A New Survey of the West Indies pp. 445-450.

105

General information is contained in Chaunu 6-5, pp. 324-329. The reports mentioned are in that most useful of all AGI legajos, Contratación 5189, to wit, Casa de Contratación to Alberto Pardo Calderón, 16 September 1639. A similar proposal can be found in a letter of Enrique Enríquez to the Consejo, dated 18 July 1638 in Portobelo AGI Contratación 5118 which reads in part, "Por remedio de lo qual convendria mandarse V.M. al presidente y juezes de la Casa de la Contratación que demas del registro ordinario que todos los años evian a Tierra Firme de cada navio, se metiesen tambien un abecedario a parte de cada uno de dichos registros, en que por excusar alla y aca prolixidad, no ha de venir mas del nombre del mercador, el numero y marca de la mercaderia, y a quantos folios del registro principal viene reconada, a quella partida diligencia que no costara mas de a'adir a la casa de los registros en Sevilla, uno o dos oficiales que en la misma mesa asistan con otros tantos pliegos como hubieren naos de flota en cada uno el abecedario en blanco, para que en el vayan sacando en membrete la razon de lo que los otros van traslado por entero en la forma y manera dicha, mandando V.M. que dichos abecedarios vengan corregidos y fimados del Presidente y juezes y cerrados y sellados se entreguen al General de los Galeones. . . ." Chaunu presents this document in 6-5, p. 332.

106

Chaunu 6-5, pp. 342-347.

107

Chaunu 6-5, pp. 362-367; Vila Vilar, p. 53. The financial condition of the Spanish crown was made worse in 1640 by the loss of the New Spain fleet to storms off the North American coast. The details of this loss are told in Peter Earle, The Treasure of the Concepción: The Wreck of the Almiranta (New York, 1979). Discussion of suspending the flota for a year comes from Casa de Contratación to Pedro Fernández Moreno, 19 January 1640, AGI Contratación 5175.

108

See Chaunu 6-5, pp. 378-401. Also see Francisco Díaz Pimentá to the Casa de Contratación, 3 March 1642, AGI Contratación 5101.

109

Chaunu 6-5, pp. 402-403; Vila Vilar, p. 51. The fair itself is documented in, Officials of Portobelo to the Casa de Contratación, 14 September 1643, AGI Contratación 5118. Regarding trade with Asia and its impact upon the Portobelo fairs, a report from the Consulado of Sevilla to the Casa de Contratación reads in part, the commerce at Panama was suffering and "de mas de este da ño, se considera que los navios en que se hubiesse de conducir el vino y azeite del Piru a las provincias volverian cargados de ropa de China cuyo trato se desea suspender, y la plata que abra de bajar por Panamá a Puerto Belo divertida por este camino, faltaria a las ferias y la ropa de Nueva España quedaria por vender y los encomenderos forzados a pasar al Piru quedandose en el que todo resulta en total ruyna del comercio de Castilla," Consulado to Casa de Contratación, 20 October 1643, AGI Contratación 5118.

110

Chaunu 6-5, pp. 432-435; Consulado of Sevilla to Casa de Contratación, 8 August 1644, AGI Contratación 5119.

111

Chaunu 6-5, pp. 444-447; Vila Vilar, pp. 51-53; "Lista de mercaderos que he pagan derechos a SM," 2 March 1646, AGI Contratación 5119.

112

Chaunu 6-5, pp. 464-469; Vila Vilar, pp. 51-53.

113

Vila Vilar, p. 53; Chaunu 6-5, pp. 478-483. A listing of the ships is found in "Previsión de los naos para la flota de T.F.," 29 June 1647, AGI Contratación 5176. The merchant data was found by accident in a legajo ignored by other researchers, including Chaunu. Contaduría 1507 contains the documents of the caja real of Panama relating to Portobelo, most of which are not very useful. The one useful document is entitled "Lista de mercaderos que he pagan derechos a S.M., 1648-1661."

114

Vila Vilar, pp. 51-53; Chaunu 6-5, pp. 508-511. The crown sequestration of the million ducats is reported in Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs, ii, p. 165. Other sources are Casa de Contratación to Don Pedro Mendes, 14 July 1649, AGI

Contratación 5119 and "Lista de mercaderos, 1649" AGI Contaduría 1507.

115

Vila Vilar, p. 53; Chaunu, 6-5, pp. 520-523. It is here that we must bid farewell to Chaunu's work, and introduce Lutgardo García Fuentes, El comercio Español con América (see note 5). See this work, pp. 417-420. Information on merchants comes from "Lista de mrcaderos, 1650," AGI Contaduría 1507.

116

Vila Vilar, p. 51; Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 388, 402, 417-424; "Lista de mercaderos, 1651," AGI Contaduría 1507.

117

Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 388, 402, 417-424. The return of this fleet saw the last major sequestration by the crown (Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs ii, p. 166; "Lista de mercaderos, 1652" AGI Contaduría 1507.

118

Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 388, 402, 417-424; Haring, Trade and Navigation p. 65. The crown wealth, 165,888 pesos, was made up of the following: 4,427 pesos de oro, 753 marcos de plata, 376 varras de plata, and 117,268 pesos de a ocho (unsigned carta of 6 February 1653, AGI Contaduría 4734.

119

Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 388, 417-424; Haring, Trade and Navigation, p. 245. More foreigners than usual attended this fair according to Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 77. Also see "Lista de mercaderos, 1654," AGI Contaduría 1507.

120

Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 388, 402, 417-424. Both Lynch (Spain Under the Hapsburgs, ii, p. 174) and Haring (Trade and Navigation, p. 245) mention the English squadron off Cádiz. They also discuss the next year, 1657, when the same English fleet damaged the New Spain flota in the Azores, both actions seriously impacting upon the royal treasury.

121

Lutgardo García Fuentes, p. 388, 402, 417-424; Moreyra y Paz Soldán, p. 79; Lynch Spain Under the Hapsburgs ii, pp. 191-192; "Lista de mercaderos, 1659," AGI Contaduría 1507.

122

Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 388, 402, 417-424.

123

Ibid.; the flota left Cádiz on 6 November in company of the New Spain fleet. At Portobelo two merchants, Pedro Díaz Zorilla and Manuel Luis Carnero, tried to introduce illicit merchandise and slaves into the trading with the help of two local vecinos. This, of course, was not unusual. What is interesting is that they were caught and fined a total of 5,500 pesos.

124

Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 166, 388, 402; unsigned letter of 1 April 1665 from Panama to the Casa de Contratación, AGI Contaduría 1370. Also see Moreyra y Paz-Soldán, p. 80.

125

Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 232, 388, 402, 417-424. This flota also took the Conde de Lemos to Peru, where he became viceroy.

126

Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 194, 388, 417-424; Lynch, II, p. 192; Attman, p. 19, 40.

127

Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 166, 388, 403, 417-424; Attman, p. 17. On the growth of Buenos Aires--to the detriment of the Lima-Panama connection--during these years see Richard Morse, "Urban Development," in Leslie Bethell, ed., Colonial Spanish America (New York, 1987), pp. 190-193; Robert Levillier, ed., Antecedentes de política económica en el Río de la Plata: documentos originales de los siglos XVI al XIX seleccionados en el Archivo de Indias de Sevilla (Madrid, 1915), 2 vols.; and Ricardo de Lafuente Machaín, Buenos Aires en el siglo XVII (Buenos Aires, 1944). A useful summary, though one that extends into the eighteenth century, is David Rock, "The Rise of Buenos Aires, 1680-1810," in Argentina, 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín (Berkeley, 1987), chapter 2, pp. 39-78.

128

The fleet was commanded by Gabriel de Cruzálegui. See Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 388, 404, 417-424. The information on the suspension of the flota is found in ibid., p. 123.

129

Ibid., pp. 166, 388, 403; Attman, p. 17; Moreyra y Paz-Soldán, p. 80.

130

Information on suspension of the fleet is in ibid., p. 123.

131

Ibid., p. 166, 194, 389, 403, 417-424; Attman, p. 17. On Smuggling into the Pacific generally, see Clayton, "Trade and Navigation in the Seventeenth-Century Vicetoroyalty of Peru," p. 14-16. Attman reports (p. 40) that the division of the silver returned to Spain was as follows (in pesos): Dutch--2,000,000; Genoan--3,000,000; French--2,700,000; and English--1,500,000.

132

A further route for contraband trade was opened in 1680 when the governors of Havana, Portobelo, and Cartagena were granted permission to trade directly with Jamaica for slaves. The records of slave trade with Portobelo is as follows: 1682, 130 slaves; 1684, 302 slaves; and 1685, 600 slaves. See Curtis Nettels, "England and the Spanish American Trade, 1680-1715," The Journal of Modern History 3:1 (March 1931) pp. 2-5.

133

Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 389, 403, 417-424; Moreyra y Paz-Soldán, p. 80. Attman divides the silver returned to Spain this way among foreign merchants (in pesos): Dutch--3,500,000; Genoan--4,500,000; French--3,000,000; and English--2,500,000.

134

Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 389, 417-424; Attman, p. 17.

135

The fleet was commanded by the Marqués de Lado after del Bao's death. See Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 389, 403, 417-424; Attman, p. 17. Attman's division of the treasure is as follows (in pesos): French--4,300,000-4,600,000; Genoan--3,600,000-4,000,000; Dutch--3,300,000; English--2,000,000-2,300,000; Flemish--2,000,000; and German--1,300,000.

136

Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 389, 417-424; Attman, p. 17. Moreyra y Paz-Soldán puts the value of total cargo traded at 10,000,000 pesos (p. 81).

137

There are a number of good studies dealing with commerce in the early eighteenth century, some mentioned above in notes 6-7 of this chapter. In addition to the Dilg and García Baquero studies, a number of books and articles have dealt with the issue of contraband trade as it involved the

South Sea Company. Four significant ones are: Nettels, "England and the Spanish-American Trade;" Vera Lee Brown, "Contraband Trade: A Factor in the Decline of Spain's Empire in America," HAHR 8:2 (May 1928) pp. 178-189; Brown, "The South Sea Company and Contraband Trade," American Historical Review 31:4 (1926) pp. 662-667; George Nelson, "Contraband Trade under the Asiento," American Historical Review 51:1 (1946) pp. 55-67. A very useful guide to the literature on the South Sea Company (in addition to the excellent bibliography in Dilg) is John G. Sperling, The South Sea Company: An Historical Essay and Bibliographical Finding List (Boston, 1962). A study that appears to be useful—I have not had an opportunity to use it—is W. G. Wood, "The Annual Ships of the South Sea Company, 1711-1736," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois, 1938.

Another theme that raises its head for the first time at the turn of the eighteenth century is the presence of French merchants off Peru for the purpose of engaging in direct contraband trade. Several studies have been made of the impact of such commerce on the carrera (all agreeing that it was a death blow). See, for example, Sergio Villalobos, "Contrabando francés en el Pacífico, 1700-1724," Revista de historia de América 51 (1961) pp. 49-80; Erik W. Dahlgren, "Voyages Français a destination de la Mer du Sud avant Bougainville (1695-1749)," Extrait des nouvelles archives de missions scientifiques, 14 (1907) pp. 423-568; and L. Vignols, "Le commerce interlope français a la Mer du Sud, au début du XVIIIe siècle," Revue d'histoire économique et social 13 (1975) pp. 240-299. Clayton briefly discusses French activity off Peru in "Trade and Navigation," (p. 18) and Dilg gives it more than a little space in his dissertation. French traders also attempted to infiltrate the Portobelo market, though after the asiento passed from the French Guiana Company to the South Sea Company, they met with little success. In 1699, for example, three French ships arrived in Portobelo under the auspices of the French company (See Nettels, "England and the Spanish-American Trade," pp. 17-18, 29-30.

138

Information for 1708 comes from Moreyra y Paz-Soldan, p. 82. Also see Celestino Andrés Araúz, "El contrabando en el Istmo de Panamá." Detailed information is also available in Geoffrey Walker, Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade, 1700-1789 (Bloomington, 1979).

139

See Araúz, "El contrabando," especially pp. 101-121; García Baquero, Cádiz y el Atlántico ii, p. 181; Moreyra y Paz-Soldán, p. 84. Also see "manifest of the English Annual

Ship, 1719," as presented in chart form in the chapter text (Untitled document, 27 February 1719, AGI Contaduría 1507.

140

See George Dilg, "The Collapse of the Portobelo Fairs," Appendix B; García Baquero, Cádiz y el Atlántico, ii, pp. 180-181; Moreyra y Paz-Soldán, p. 85.

141

See Dilg, "The Collapse of the Portobelo Fairs," Appendix B; García Baquero, Cádiz y el Atlántico, ii, pp. 182-183. Also, Arau 'z ("El Contrabando, p. 125) says English goods were sold this year generally at ten percent below Spanish goods, making them, of course, sell first.

142

The literature on eighteenth-century warfare in the Caribbean is abundant, even more so than on the sixteenth century. Although it is not entirely within scope here to make an inclusive listing, mention should be made of a dozen or so of the most useful studies relating to "the century of imperial warfare." A good, general overview of not just the eighteenth-century wars, but all wars, is George C. Kohn, Dictionary of Wars, (New York, 1987) which presents brief summaries of all the conflicts mentioned here. Arrangement is alphabetical. Other general studies, with an European emphasis (for background) are Peter Padfield, Tide of Empires: Decisive Naval Campaigns in the Rise of the West (Boston, 1982), vol ii, 1654-1763; Dorn, Competition for Empire: 1740-1763, especially pp. 80-178, 251-292, 318-386; Richard Heer, The Eighteenth Century Revolution in Spain, pp. 376-397; and Jean O. McLachlan, Trade and Peace with Old Spain, 1667-1750: A Study of the Influence of Commerce on Anglo-Spanish Diplomacy in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century, (Cambridge, 1940). General studies relating more directly to warfare in the West Indies include: John Parry and Philip Sherlock, A Short History of the West Indies (New York, 1956), pp. 112-141; Peggy K. Liss, Atlantic Empires: The Network of Trade and Revolution, 1713-1826, (Baltimore, 1983), a truly remarkable book--perhaps the best on the topic; and J. Leitch Wright, Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America, (Athens, Georgia, 1971). Regional studies include Antonio J. Valdés, Historia de la isla de Cuba y en especial de la Habana, (Habana, 1964) which details, in addition to the general colonial history of the island, events after the British capture of Habana in 1763; Michael Craton, A History of the Bahamas, (London, 1962), especially pp. 77-172; and

Verne E. Chatelain, The Defenses of Spanish Florida: 1565-1763, (Washington, D.C., 1941). These materials are synthesized in the context of Panamanian history in chapters that follow. The literature of the eighteenth-century economy is almost as rich--see note 145, below.

143

Preliminary data presented by Alfredo Castellero Calvo in his paper, "Reflexiones para una historia del comercio y la navegación del período colonial." My thanks to Professor John TePaske for supplying me this information. Also see Raimundo Pérez Boto, "El auge comercial de Portobelo y Panamá durante la crisis intersecular preindependentista (1798-1802)," Montalbán, 14 (1983) pp. 353-396.

144

Ibid., in both cites above, and Lutgardo García Fuentes, pp. 417-420.

145

Eighteenth-century economic history is a complicated subject, ironically made more so by the number of documents and records that survive which tend to dilute focus rather than clarify issues. The most useful general studies not yet mentioned (as they relate to our topic) are Immanuel Wallerstein, The Modern World-System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750, especially pp. 244-290; Fernand Braudel, The Perspective of the World, pp. 387-429. Of studies focusing more specifically on Latin America, see Walker, Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade, 1700-1789; John Fisher, Commercial Relations Between Spain and Spanish America in the Era of Free Trade, 1778-1796, (Liverpool, 1985); R. J. Shafer, The Economic Societies in the Spanish World (1763-1821), (Syracuse, 1958); Roland Hussey, The Caracas Company, 1728-1784, (Cambridge, 1934). Mention must be made of Jacques Barbier's work, especially his "Peninsular Finance and Colonial Trade: The Dilemma of Charles IV's Spain," Journal of Latin American Studies, 12 (1980), pp. 21-37, and Barbier and Allan J. Keuthe, eds., The North American Role in the Spanish Imperial Economy, 1760-1819, (Manchester, 1984). Also note Barbara and Stanley Stein, "Concepts and Realities of Spanish Economic Growth, 1759-1798," Historia Ibérica 1 (1973), pp. 103-119.

THE FOUNDATION AND FORTIFICATION OF PORTOBELLO, 1570-1601

By 1570, Tierra Firme, while economically sound, was militarily unstable. Silver returns from Peru were high, and the isthmian trajín had become one of the most important links in the Carrera de Indias. Trajín support industries such as muleteering and maize farming resulted in a good deal of prosperity for the residents of Panama City and the settlers of the south coast that were involved in the transisthmian commercial structure or on its immediate periphery.¹ Because of the large amount of wealth in Panama during the trajín season, and because of its geographic role as a doorway to the unprotected waters of the Pacific, Tierra Firme began to attract adventurous northern European interlopers. Accordingly, the Atlantic port, Nombre de Dios, and the Caribbean coast of the Isthmus became the focus of foreign attack. These incursions became so significant by the last quarter of the sixteenth century that action was taken that would change the military facade of the realm.

Tierra Firme in the Last Quarter of the Sixteenth
Century

Both published and unpublished documentation, including an extensive relación geográfica, exists to paint an accurate picture of late sixteenth-century Tierra Firme.² One single document, the interrogation of García de los Reyes Paz (notary to the king) sworn in Nombre de Dios on 15 May 1571, is quite informative. The interrogation lists over a dozen acts of piracy which were committed against the vecinos of Nombre de Dios and the Isthmus during the years 1569-1571.³ In thirteen attacks, over 337,000 pesos worth of merchandise and specie was taken by French and English "Lutheran" corsairs; on an unspecified date a French corsair intercepted a royal frigate and took 100,000 pesos in gold and silver; and during May of 1571 pirates patrolling the coast between Nombre de Dios and the mouth of the Chagres River took thirteen river barges valued at over 150,000 pesos. Corsairs were not content to stay on the north coast-five of the cases reported by García de Paz involved enemy penetration up the Chagres to the mid-isthmian town of Las Cruces. In 1571, for example, pirates sailed up the river with a galliot and a sloop in search of river barks, taking at least two such Spanish vessels with cargoes of silks, linens, wine, soap, and other things with a total value of more than 20,000 pesos. In another case, just before the arrival of the flota of 1571 a bark valued at 50,000 pesos⁴ was captured. In May of the same year, the exasperated

cabildo of Panama wrote the king describing the state of the northern coast, saying that the corsairs were "so fully in possession of the coast of Nombre de Dios . . . that traffic dare not sail from Santo Domingo thither, and trade and commerce are diminishing between the Windward Islands and this main."⁵

There was a constant fear voiced in Spanish correspondence that the corsairs might penetrate across the Isthmus and begin to terrorize the Pacific coasts of the Empire--a fear that was realized as early as 1577 when the English pirate John Oxenham crossed and attacked the Pearl Islands in 1577.⁶

Another threat to the vecinos of Nombre de Dios was the large number of escaped slaves, called cimarrones, who took every opportunity to attack their former masters. A letter dated in the Atlantic port that was sent to the crown relates that, "the matter in this kingdom which most urgently needs remedial action is the problem of dispersing the cimarrones . . . they are numerous and they come forth on the roads and kill traders."⁷ The same writer reports that the blacks raided slave quarters in the heart of Nombre de Dios to add to their numbers. On 19 May 1571, in fact, two Spaniards were killed on one such incursion.⁸ The cimarrón problem became amplified when the blacks began to cooperate with the pirates--Oxenham and Drake both used cimarrones as guides.⁹ To avoid Spanish retaliations, the cimarrones organized

themselves into villages which they located deep in the jungles. A series of diplomatic and military attacks in the mid 1570's brought about some alleviation of the cimarrón situation, but the problem would last in a diminished form¹⁰ well into the seventeenth century.

The whole problem of the defense of the north coast of the Isthmus came to a head on the night of 29 July 1572 when an English force under Francis Drake entered Nombre de Dios and held it for several hours before the vecinos were able to gather sufficient forces to retake the town. Drake took little treasure from the village on this occasion; when he returned a year later and attacked the trajín mule trains,¹¹ however, he made off with considerable booty.

The defense posture of Tierra Firme was untenable in the 1570s and the residents of the Isthmus wrote letter after letter to Philip II seeking needed relief. Typical of these cries for help, on 24 February 1573 the cabildo of Panama wrote, "The realm at present is so terrified and the spirits of all are so disturbed that we know not in what words to emphasize to Your Majesty the solicitude we make."¹² The most frequent request was for several galleys to patrol the coast.¹³ On more than fourteen occasions requests for naval craft were dispatched. In response, a brigantine was sent to Tierra Firme in 1573, remarkably improving conditions at Nombre de Dios.¹⁴ In addition, galleys stationed at Cartagena patrolled the isthmian coast frequently,

especially after it became known that Drake was again at
¹⁵
 large in the area, and after 1578 several galleys were
 stationed at Nombre de Dios itself. These ships, however,
 had deteriorated by 1584, and again corsairs appeared off the
 defenseless coast.

Contaduría account lists reveal that only 40 soldiers
 were stationed in Nombre de Dios in the early 1580's--
 between 1581 and 1583, however, no troops whatever guarded
¹⁶
 the Atlantic approaches to Panama. This shortage was
 compounded by a shortage of artillery and other weapons.
 Indicating the significance of the artillery shortage, in
 1583 the cabildo of Nombre de Dios initiated legal
 action against Panama City to get back four cannon which
¹⁷
 had been lent to the latter in 1580.

Around 1579, the Council of the Indies made a
 general request for information about the status of
 fortifications in the principal ports of the Indies. Admiral
¹⁸
 Antonio Navarro de Prado reported on Nombre de Dios. The
 admiral had little to say, in that there were no
 fortifications at the port; he did, however, comment that
 Nombre de Dios was not a suitable keystone port for the
 Carrera de Indias. At this time a recommendation was made to
 construct a fort on the reef adjacent to the city--a plan
 first promulgated in 1540. No action, however, was taken on
 this proposal.

In response to the heightened level of northern European activity--especially English after the beginning of the long Spanish War--the Spanish crown decided to take action on the Caribbean defenses in the early 1580's. In 1585 the Italian engineer Juan Bautista Antonelli and the Spaniard Juan de Tejada were sent to the New World to make surveys of the major ports and to come up with plans for their effective fortification. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Antonelli family was already famous as a dynasty of military engineers. Natives of Rome, and thus directly involved in the Hapsburg-Valois rivalry of early sixteenth-century northern Italy, the family came under the employment of the Spanish crown during the reign of Philip II. The Antonellis saw to the construction of defenses across the Iberian peninsula as well as in North Africa in the context of the ongoing struggle with the Ottoman Empire. It was no surprise, then, that Juan Bautista (the second of three brothers, each of whom would distinguish himself in service to the crown) was chosen to see to the security of the Caribbean.¹⁹ On this trip Antonelli and Tejada visited Cartagena, San Juan, Santo Domingo, Veracruz, Nombre de Dios, and Havana. Only once before, in the 1560s during the tour of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, had Caribbean defenses been addressed in an inclusive, comprehensive manner. Antonelli's recommendations for the fortification of Spain's principal New World ports would shape their defenses for the next century, just as

Menéndez' restructuring of the transatlantic commercial
 20
 system would itself endure well into the Bourbon era.

Of all the major ports surveyed, Antonelli found Nombre de Dios to be the most ill-suited for defense; additionally, over and over again the harbor had demonstrated itself to be an unsafe anchorage in times of rough weather. The engineer wrote to the king in 1587, describing the harbor and making recommendations for the defense of the Isthmus. A copy of this letter was found aboard a Spanish ship which was taken by English pirates, subsequently being published in Richard Hakluyt's famous collection of voyages. A short excerpt is quite revealing:

Nombre de Dios is builded upon a sandy bar hard by the seaside, it is a city of some thirty households or inhabitants: their houses are built of timber and most of the people which are there are foreigners, they are there today and gone tomorrow; it is full of woods and some places of the land are overflowed with water continually by reason of much rain which does fall upon the hills . . . the city is builded and situated very well if it were a good harbor, it standeth upon the east side upon a rock where there may be builded a very good fort like the (present) platform for the safeguard of this harbor; but seeing it is but a bad haven and of shallow water, therefore I do think that it is not needfull for Your Majesty to be at any charges in fortifying the place, but only a trench be made of earth and clay. . . . It is a very bad harbor and neither is there any good water. . . . If Your Majesty will give order that this city should be plucked down and newly builded again in Puerto Bello the channel of this harbor may be stopped up with timber and stone (to render it useless to corsairs).²¹

In 1594 Francesco Carletti described Nombre de Dios in this way:

Nombre de Dios consists of houses made of wood and is situated in a very unhealthy location which is prone to promote the transfer of disease, as one can imagine. It is an uncomfortable place and lacks everything men need to live--all necessities must be imported from elsewhere as the areas around Nombre de Dios consist of nothing other than very dense, uninhabitable jungle. In the same Nombre de Dios we remained perhaps fifteen days, a time of great uncomfot and in extreme shortage of necessities, especially bread which is nearly impossible to come across. In the time that we were there we ate but one loaf, and that made by an indian from corn. . . . The worst thing, however, was that it was impossible to defend ourselves against the mosquitoes, bugs which produced sore bites and caused great misery. . . . Also in the city there are an uncountable number of frogs and toads which are so plentiful as to be found under the feet of all who reside there.²²

Figure 3-1 depicts the harbor of Nombre de Dios as it appeared in 1541.²³ Drawings of ships indicate the location of both the channel into the port and the anchorage in the lee of the principal reef. The notation under the reef reads that upon that spot was to be built a fortaleza, or a small fort.

While the entire northern coast of Tierra Firme was sickly, Nombre de Dios was, perhaps, one of the worst locations of all. The poor selection which resulted in the settlement of the town was not unique. Indeed, Spaniards often settled the worst possible locations on any given coast: Santa Marta was settled while Cartagena bay was left empty; Panama City would have to be moved in 1673 some six

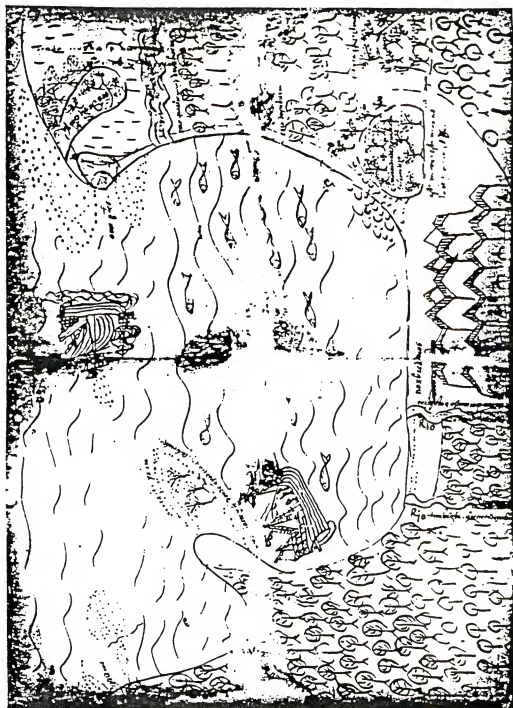


Figure 3-1 Nombre de Dios (Source: AGI/MP Panama 1)

miles to a better location; Veracruz, like Nombre de Dios, was also moved a few miles to its present site; and in Florida, St. Augustine was settled while the excellent harbor at the mouth of the St. Johns river was left deserted—even after the French made an effort to settle there.

At any rate, a small hill to the right side of Nombre de Dios is also marked for fortification on figure 3-1. This cerro was in fact fortified with six or seven guns.²⁴ This writer located the breech end of a twenty-four pounder at this site, a gun which, due to its damaged state, was left behind at the time of the move to Portobelo.

By the early 1580's, it was generally acknowledged that the Atlantic port on the Isthmus had to be relocated, and the plan which gathered the most support called for a move from the Isthmus proper to Puerto de Caballos in Central America. As early as 1536 the governor of Honduras, Francisco de Montejo, advocated such a move, and in 1556 Juan García de Hermsillo, a Panama merchant who had moved his operations to Guatemala, repeated the recommendation. Antonelli was given instructions to determine the wisdom of such a move. After an exploratory trip to Central America, the engineer came out against the plan, and in fact he submitted an alternative proposal which was alluded to in the 1587 letter quoted above. Antonelli advised that the Atlantic isthmian port be moved a few miles to the west to Portobelo, and the crown quickly agreed to implement his recommendations.²⁵

Antonelli and Portobelo

Antonelli saw Portobelo as one of the greatest natural bays in the Indies, and even though Portobelo is a good harbor, Antonelli seems to have exaggerated its strongpoints as part of his argument to have Nombre de Dios relocated within the Audiencia of Panama. Portobelo, Antonelli wrote, was some five leagues from Nombre de Dios, and "is a very good harbor and sufficient to receive a great store of ships and hath very good anchoring and fresh water." At Nombre de Dios, he wrote, the harbor was so poor that ships had to unload half their cargoes before they could cross the reef to get into the anchorage, but at Portobelo the water was deep and safe for navigation, six fathoms deep near shore, increasing to twelve fathoms in the center of the bay. Antonelli also related that Portobelo had no rocks or reefs, being "cleane ground or sand." This claim, however, is false, the harbor having a large number of reefs, some of which would eventually be exploited for construction materials for the fortifications. The location, he went on, had all things necessary to build a large city. The ground upon which the city was to be built was stoney and solid, the climate supposedly good for growing maize, there was a large number of trees which could be used in ship construction, agua dulce was available in large quantities (fed from a dozen or so small rivers which flowed into the bay from the surrounding

hills), and there was a large swamp which might be drained and made into a grazing area for cattle.

Antonelli's initial defense recommendations called for two fortresses of moderate size, one on each side of the mouth of the bahía. The exact position of these forts can be seen on figure 3-2, a map drawn by the engineer himself in 1597.²⁶ Also shown on figure 3-2 is the location of the city (selected by Antonelli on his first inspection of the port in 1586). A recent geodetic survey map--and the most accurate map of Portobelo now available--is presented as figure 3-3.²⁷ It should be referred to in order to provide a constant image against which the various colonial maps presented here can be compared.

Antonelli's proposed fort for the north shore, named San Felipe de Sotomayor after King Philip II and the governor of Tierra Firme, Don Alonso de Sotomayor (one of colonial Panama's best administrators) was to be an integral part of Portobelo's defenses until 1739 when it was destroyed by Admiral Edward Vernon.²⁸ Although San Felipe grew into a powerful fortress, Antonelli's initial plans were quite modest. In his letter of 1587, he advised that the fort be provided with only four cannon--it was to be the minor of the two castillos.²⁹ The south shore fort, labeled on Antonelli's map as the "fortaleza de Santiago," was to be the larger construction, consisting of two parts, a trinchera (or dirt platform) near the water's edge and a small tower



Figure 3-2 Antonelli's Map of Portobelo (Source AGI/MP 12)

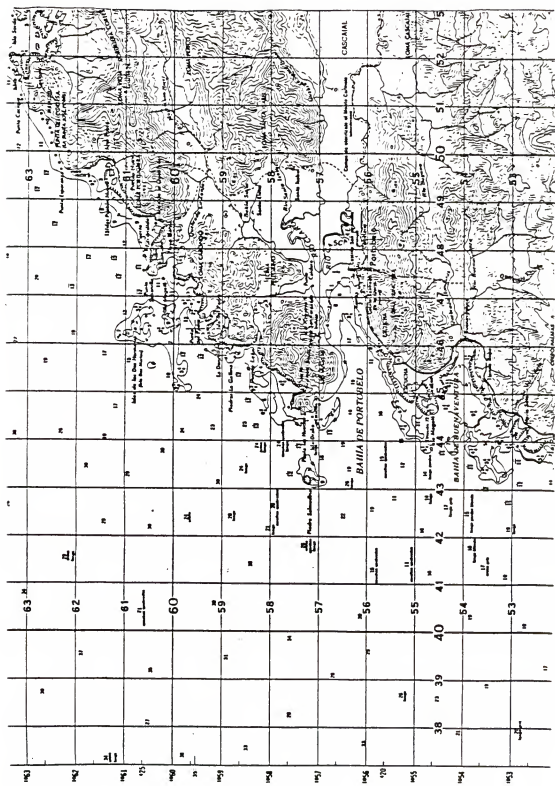


Figure 3-3 Geodetic Map of Portobelo (Source: Geodetic Survey Series E762)

slightly higher on the hill directly overlooking the lower battery. The trinchera was to have eight pieces of ordnance and twenty-five soldiers, the upper tower to be manned by twenty musketeers, presumably to defend the platform from enemy sniper fire from the heights to the south. By the time actual construction would begin, circa 1593, Antonelli's plans had been significantly altered, fort San Felipe being then designated as the principal defensive structure.³⁰

No substantial work was undertaken on the Isthmus during the remainder of the 1580's. During these years Antonelli was occupied with supervising the fortification of the other ports of the Carrera de Indias.³¹ While working on the defenses of Havana with Cristóbal de Roda,³² the engineer received orders directing him to leave the Cuban port for the Isthmus to oversee the work at Portobelo. He left Habana on 8 October 1594 to take up his new station.³³

A cédula dated 20 December 1593 allocated 100,000 ducats for construction of the new city and the road to Panama that would have to be cleared.³⁴ In addition to the 100,000 ducat allocation, this cédula also levied a new tax of one-half ducat per "carga" on trajín traffic to support the construction efforts at Portobelo. Table 3-1 shows a summary of expenditures from these funds. A complete listing of exact expenses from this fund has not been found, the data in table 3-1 show only the dates and amounts drawn from the fund for work at Portobelo. No pattern of work intensity can be

Table 3-1

Funds Allocated for the defense of Portobelo, 1593-1605.

I. By <u>Cédula Real</u> , 20 Dec. 1593 (Total of 100,000p)		
	16 Dec. 1594	8,333p
	4 Feb. 1595	12,000p
	14 Feb. 1595	8,333p
	17 April 1595	8,000p
	12 June 1595	8,333p
	29 July 1595	2,000p
	6 Nov. 1595	8,333p
	2 Dec. 1595	2,796p
	27 Dec. 1595	3,333p
	1 March 1596	8,333p
	14 May 1596	8,333p
	17 June 1596	<u>7,202p</u>
	Sub-total	85,332p
From <u>avería</u> from the mule trains:		
	14 Dec. 1596	12,222p
	5 Nov. 1596	2,807p
	19 Nov. 1596	540p
	5 Dec. 1596	150p
	13 June 1596	125p
	"	400p
	24 Feb. 1596	53p
	31 May 1596	103p
	7 Aug. 1596	58p
	14 Dec. 1596	200p
	4 Oct. 1596	10p
	15 Oct. 1596	306p
	15 Dec. 1596	394p
	3 Jan. 1597	24p
	4 Aug. 1597	340p
	10 Aug. 1597	390p
	12 Aug. 1597	<u>26p</u>
	Total	104,300p
II. By Cédula of 24 Feb. 1597		
		60,000 ducats
III. By Cédula of 13 Oct. 1598		
		60,000 "
IV. By Cédula of 10 Oct. 1602		
		25,000 "
V. From Audiencia of Panamá,		
	16 Sept. 1603-5 July 1604	90,000 "
VI. From the Royal Treasury (n.d.)		
		36,875 "
VII. By Cédula of 17 June 1605		
		56,000 "
VIII. Alcabala receipts (n.d.)		
		55,247 "
	Total	543,122 ducats

Note: From ANP, Susto Documents, vol.xii, doc. 227; AGI, Contaduría 1506, folios 28-33.

traced from the dates in table 3-1: eight of the twelve months of the year are represented, indicating that work did not stop during the rainy season. It should be remembered, however, that on the northern coast of Panama, every season is the rainy season. A partial listing of expenses can be found in selected folios from Contaduría 1506, which contains some of the books of the caja real of Portobelo. Tables 3-1 and 3-2 present representative selections of expenses during the period 1593-1596.³⁵ Even in these small extracts it can be observed that large amounts of money were being spent on medicine, on wages, on slave and mule rentals, and the like.

Although Antonelli was on hand after 1595 to oversee the construction of the new town, the real authority on the Isthmus, the authority to which even the engineer had to answer, was the Commission of Constructions and Fortifications which had been set up by the appropriations cédula of 1593. Composed of several distinguished men, the Commission had to approve each and every outlay of funds. Names of members of the commission frequently found are Miguel Ruiz del Duayen (alcalde mayor of Portobelo), Alonso Capata (paymaster of the Portobelo forts), Dr. Diego de Villanueva Capata (oidor of the Audiencia at Panama), and Don Francisco Valverdi de Mercado (former official of the treasury of New Spain).³⁶

A serious labor problem faced Antonelli and the Commissioners during the 1590's. The labor crisis had two

Table 3-2

A Listing of Expenditures Relating to the Defense of Portobelo, 1593-1596.

<u>Amount</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>To</u>	<u>Reason</u>
222p/2r	21 Nov. 1595	Agustín de Bonilla	Medical supplies
5,500p	--	Andrés Gómez	20,000 fanegas of lime
50p	23 March 1596	Juan de Avendaño	Wages (priest)
50p	21 Feb. 1595	Diego Artiz	General Wages
50p	18 Sept. 1595	Pedro Arce	Stonemason
60p	18 Dec. 1595	Juan Rodríguez Alvarez	"
44p/6r	5 Dec. 1595	Bartolomé Lastra	"
30p	9 Feb. 1596	Juan de Godoy	"
50p	5 March 1596	Lorenzo Martín	Blacksmith
400p	--	Martín Deveas	Carpenter
30p	--	Juan Pérez	Escribano of Constructions
50p	11 Jan. 1597	Pedro de Soto	Baker
100p	--	Pedro Caño	Carpenter
120p	24 Jan. 1595	Alberto de Ojeda	--
40p	20 July 1596	Hernando Asveurs	Use of Slaves
40p	4 July 1596	Hernando Díaz	"
40p	8 Aug. 1596	Juan de Peréa	"
100p	4 Dec. 1596	Pedro Moreno Alvarez	Use of eleven slaves
150p	25 Feb. 1597	Fernando de Córdoba	Use of Slaves
400p	20 April 1597	Dr. Hamusco	"
60p	11 March 1595	Pedro Bermúdez	Use of four mules
22p/2r	--	Agustín de Bonilla	Medical supplies
<hr/>			
7,492p/2r			

Note: from AGI, Contaduría 1506, folios 474-476.

basic causes. First and foremost was the permanent labor shortage on the Isthmus as a whole. The trajín required a tremendous number of slaves and mules to transport the thousands of tons of merchandise across the continent--few slaves could be spared for work at Portobelo. The second cause was a high mortality rate due to the sickly climate of Tierra Firme. Even Antonelli was twice struck down with illness, in February and October of 1595.³⁷ Antonelli required the use of at least two hundred slaves on a full time basis to make progress at Portobelo.³⁸ Most of these slaves were secured from private proprietors in Panama City for a very high price. A cédula of 1597 makes mention of the labor crisis, acknowledging that as there were no slave-owning vecinos in Portobelo, there was no real work force to call upon.³⁹ Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa, writing a few years after the turn of the century, reported that a village⁴⁰ of free blacks was located about three miles from the port. These blacks, he wrote, were often exploited as a cheap labor source by the authorities of Portobelo.

As mentioned above, a second, equally important shortage was one of ordnance and ammunition. As was the case throughout the Indies, cannon seem to have been very rare in Tierra Firme at this time. During the last half of the 1590s, great care was expended to document the location, translocation, condition, and munitions supply of every piece of artillery on the northern coast. It was noted, for

example, that four guns arrived in Portobelo on 18 November 1597,⁴¹ and earlier, in August of 1595, six pieces had arrived from Nombre de Dios.⁴² By 1601, however, a large enough supply of artillery had arrived to fully arm the new forts. Because of the shortage of artillery, the 40 soldiers stationed in Nombre de Dios were not an effective deterrent to foreign attack.⁴³ The author of a 1595 document discussing this shortage wrote, "soldados sin artilleria o artilleria sin soldados no hacen efecto."⁴⁴ Despite these problems, work continued on the city, on Castillo San Felipe, and on the fortaleza Santiago.

Sir Francis Drake, the First Forts,
and Hernando de Montoya

On 10 December 1595 Don Alonso de Sotomayor, former Governor of Chile and a veteran of the Dutch Wars, arrived at Nombre de Dios to take up his new position as Governor and Captain General of Tierra Firme and as President of the Audiencia at Panama; just two days later, on 12 December, news followed that Francis Drake was again on the rampage in the Caribbean. Don Alonso galvanized Panama into action. Antonelli had pointed out the strategic importance of Portobelo in a letter to the king of 15 May 1595, wherein he stated, "Portobelo es la llave de todo este reyno y el del Pirú,"⁴⁵ and now with Drake again threatening the empire, he worried that Portobelo—or even Panama itself—might fall as had Santo Domingo and Cartagena in previous years.⁴⁶

Therefore, one of the key defensive positions on the coast, the mouth of the Chagres river, was quickly fortified with a small trinchera which would eventually grow into the great fortress of San Lorenzo. While Antonelli was supervising work at Chagres, Drake and his fleet burned Nombre de Dios and then sailed into Portobelo and took that port, meeting with little resistance from the unfinished forts. The English remained in Portobelo from 28 January to 8 February. Drake himself died just before the town was taken; he was given a sea burial off a small island which still bears his name. Ironically, this same voyage had also witnessed the death of John Hawkins off San Juan just a few weeks before.

The English, now under the command of Sir Thomas Baskerville, described the Portobelo they found as follows:

In Puerto Belo were found eight or ten houses, besides a great new house in which they were then building for the Governour that should have bene for that place; there was also a very strong fort all to the water's side with flankers of great trees and stones filled with earth between; and had not our comming disappointed their pretence, they would have made it one of the strongest places in all the Main. They were meant to have builded a great towne.⁴⁷

The English destroyed much of what the Spanish had accomplished since 1593. Nevertheless, after Baskerville sailed away Portobelo was quickly readied for occupation. The English attack again pointed out the need for both the immediate transfer of the port and the completion of the new

fortifications. The cabildo of Nombre de Dios, however, was not quite prepared to make the move during 1596. Claiming the new roads from Portobelo to Panama--constructed under the direction of Juan de Magán and his crew of fifty slaves--were as yet impassable, Manuel Fernández, the procurador of the town, petitioned that the move to Portobelo be postponed until after the arrival of the next flota.⁴⁸ The move was finally effected on 20 March 1597; Francisco Valverde y Mercado presiding at the founding ceremonies.⁴⁹ Shortly before, on 24 February, the crown issued a cédula providing 60,000 additional ducats to finish off the construction of the city's forts and public buildings.⁵⁰

The main construction costs during this time accrued from the building of the north shore fortress. Figures 3-4 and 3-5 are plans of this important defensive work.⁵¹ Illustrating how San Felipe conformed to the contour of construction site, figure 3-6--a profile drawing--reveals that the lowest gun platforms were quite close to the waterline, while the upper reaches of the castillo were much higher in elevation.⁵² The basic design of the fort included a principal gun deck, that of Santa Bárbara, some fifty varas long. Moving up the hill, towards the east, stood the main plaza and the entrance to the fort. Above this plaza was a small platform, labeled on the plans as the plaza of San Sebastián. A small defense enclosure was located directly in front of the main gate, while on the right side

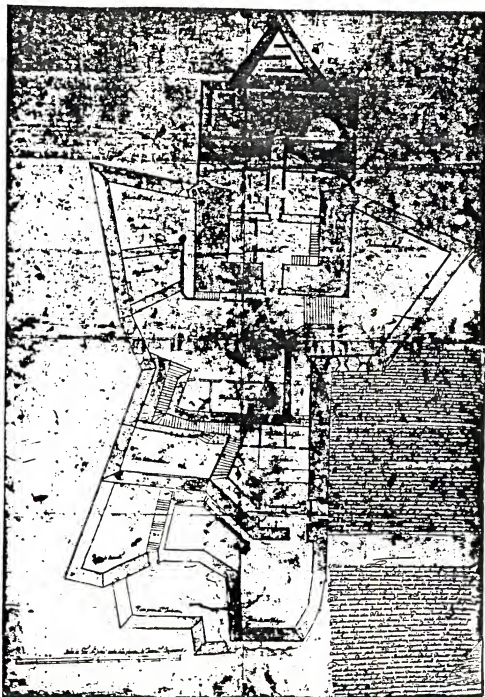


Figure 3-4 Castillo San Felipe (Source: AGI/MP Panama 13)

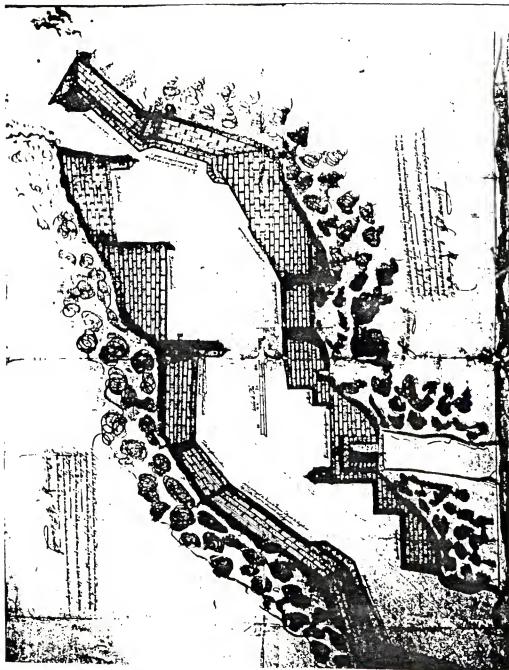


Figure 3-6 Castillo San Felipe (Source: AGI/MP Panama 16)

was the jail. The upper half of the castle consisted of two great bastions and a central tower. Troop quarters, storage rooms, and service facilities were located in this section of the fortress. The bastion facing the bay was named the baluarte of Austria; the other, somewhat smaller and less important, was named after Santa María.

Amid great ceremony, construction of the fort began in earnest on 11 September 1597.⁵³ This work continued until the middle of 1598 when construction was stopped so that labor could be redirected to the building of the small south shore fortaleza, but work was again underway on San Felipe by the turn of the century.

Material used in the construction of these--and all subsequent fortifications at Portobelo--was the brain coral which was found in large quantities in the bay and along the coast. The coral was quite easy to cut while fresh. Once the shell had been cut and set with lime, however, the sun baked it into a very hard, solid wall. Arches and domes--such as the tops of watch towers and arches--were made, as in most New World Spanish forts, with small clay bricks. The exterior walls, when finished, were coated with a heavy layer of lime and painted a brilliant white, while towers and edgings were trimmed in red-wash, creating a formidable, clean sight much unlike the ruins seen today.

Antonelli soon left the Isthmus, placing Hernando de Montoya in charge of the public works.⁵⁴ But with Antonelli

gone, disorder and frustration rapidly set in. Montoya reported to the crown that he spent most of his time, effort, and money correcting construction errors in San Felipe.⁵⁵ He reported the castle, as it existed about halfway through construction, diverged greatly from Antonelli's model. The engineer's design called for the tower of the fort to be twenty-three feet in elevation above the lower platforms--in actuality, however, the resulting constructions were over fifty percent off mark. The twin bastions of Santa María and Austria were also out of measurement, as were nearly all the lower gun decks. Adding to the confusion, sickness continually took a heavy toll on the work force and the engineers.

While work on San Felipe was crawling along in a forward (albeit confused) direction, fundamental revisions were being made in the tactical layout of the south shore defenses. By 1597 the fortaleza Santiago, originally to have consisted of a large tower with four extensive bastions together with a sea level gun platform, was no more than a small trinchera with a few cannon. The trinchera Santiago, however, was no simple earthwork--indeed, as in the case of San Felipe, the gun emplacements were made of coral. Figure 3-7, a map of Portobelo dated in 1600, shows the trinchera as constructed in the location selected by Antonelli. The location of a four-bastioned tower can be found several hundred feet



Figure 3-7 Portobelo Bay (Source: AGI/MP Panama 17)

56

towards the city, but work at this site was never undertaken.

A still larger change in the south shore layout was almost undertaken when the location of the city proper was questioned. The position of the city in figure 3-7 illustrates the location selected by Antonelli in 1587. Montoya and others, however, thought that Antonelli had not chosen the best possible location for the town. The crown requested Don Alonso to initiate an investigation as to the feasibility of moving the nearly finished city to the east end of the bay, to the so-called San Cristóbal site. Figure 3-7 shows the position of the postulated walled city, and figure 3-8 shows the plan developed for the proposed city.⁵⁷

Portobelo, as planned by Antonelli, was sandwiched on a 800 foot wide strip of level ground between the sharply rising mountains and the waters of the bay. Presumably should an enemy force gain control of the heights above the city, Antonelli's Portobelo would be indefensible--or so argued the proponents of the move to the San Cristóbal site. The only location which was far enough away from the heights to allow for an effective defense system built around a complex of city walls was this area at the east end of the harbor. Montoya estimated the cost of moving the city to be 167,888 pesos in view of the fact that all the public works undertaken over the last five years would essentially have to be abandoned.⁵⁸ Aside from the financial consideration,

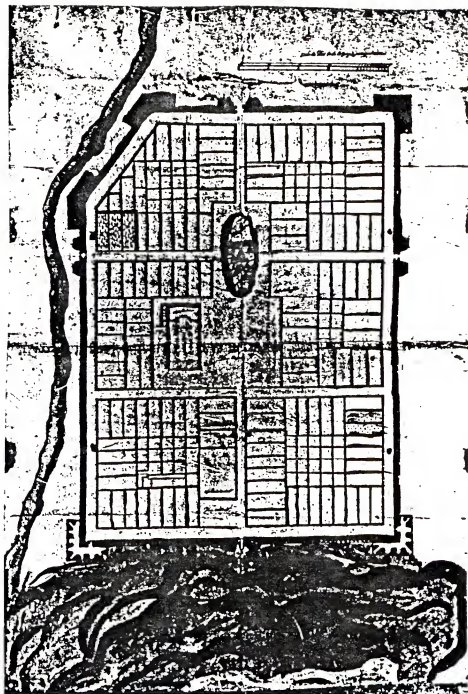


Figure 3-8 Portobelo: San Cristobal Proposal (Source: AGI/MP Panama 18)

there was at least one other reason for not moving the city: the entire east end of the harbor was quite shallow and unnavigable. Had the move been effected, merchandise from the galeones would have to be unloaded on the south shore and then transported to the city, whereas Antonelli's Portobelo directly faced a deep water anchorage. Principally because of its high cost, however, the plan was pigeon-holed, not to be seriously reconsidered for another 70 years.

Meanwhile, back at Castillo San Felipe, in the face of the construction problems that threatened continued delays in bringing the fortress on line, the commissioners began considering a significant alteration in Antonelli's plan for the fortress. It was now reasoned that a proper defense of the bay required a larger concentration of artillery at the mouth of the bay at San Felipe.⁵⁹ A plan to build a new, larger gun deck at the base of the castle was put forward. The design for this new parapet, always referred to in contemporary documentation as the Santa Bárbara platform, is presented here as figure 3-9.⁶⁰ The outlay which would be required for the construction of the platform--estimated at 25,000 pesos--was deemed to be well merited; an additional ten pieces of artillery would be added to those already planned, bringing the total number of guns in the lower battery to twenty. The plan for the platform was drawn up by Montoya and approved by Miguel Ruiz del Duayen, Gonzalo de Ayala (captain of the infantry and sargento mayor of Tierra

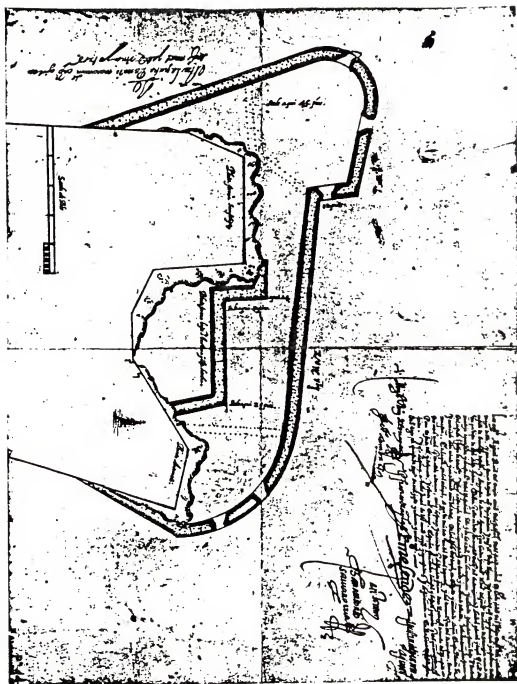


Figure 3-9 The Santa Barbara Platform (Source: AGI/MP Panama 14)

Firme, Pedro Meléndez (captain of the infantry and castellano of Santiago, Agustín de Agusco, and Don Alonso de Sotomayor. The platform was to be over 150 feet long and was to extend the lower deck some twenty to thirty feet beyond Antonelli's outermost walls. This plan, however, like the San Cristóbal proposals, was not acted upon at this time.

By 1601, therefore, Portobelo's defenses, still essentially as envisioned by Antonelli, were nearly finished. They did not have long to wait before the first test of their ability to defend the city.

William Parker's Attack, 1601

Having sailed against the Spanish Main many times in his long career, Captain William Parker was one of the last of the Elizabethan seamen. In late 1600 Parker again set out from Plymouth with three vessels, the Prudence of 100 tons, the Pearl of 60 tons, and a small pinnace of 20 tons. The total complement of the expedition was something over 200
61 men. The more important of Parker's men were Master Robert Rawlin (who sailed as vice-admiral), Edward Giles, Philip Ward (both of whom were infantry captains), and the three captains of the vessels, Fugars, Loriman, and Ashley.

During the course of the westward voyage Parker's fleet was hit by a storm which sank his pinnace, together with fifteen men. His numbers thus reduced, Parker nevertheless sailed on to the New World. After burning the city of St.

Vincent and dividing its spoils among his men, Parker sailed for the Main itself, and while on the way to Panama taking several barks off the Venezuelan coast--prizes which produced 500 pounds in ransom payments. A Spanish slaver was also taken.

Once arrived off the coast of Tierra Firme on 3 February 1601, as Parker himself wrote:

I embarked a hundred and fiftie of my men in two small pinnaces and two fine shallops, and went for the isles of Bastimentos, and landing there upon said islands which are peopled and very fruitful, I took sixe or seven Negroes for guides, and so presently with our pinnasses and boats entered the mouth of the river of Portobello, the seventh of February, about two o'clock after midnight, the moone shining very brightly.⁶²

As the launches reached a point opposite Castillo San Felipe, the guards on duty hailed the boats requesting identification. The English replied in Spanish that they were from Cartagena. Officers at the castle then commanded Parker's vessels to anchor so that the castellano could consult with the military command located in the town on the south shore. Parker, perhaps fearing an artillery barrage, followed the instructions and anchored his launches and waited in the middle of the channel for about an hour before continuing into the bay. Just past 2:00 a.m., he sailed with the two smaller launches past Santiago and landed in Triana, a suburb of Portobelo between the city and the ⁶³fortaleza. Parker had with him at this time about 30 men. The Spanish soon recognized that something was afoot, and the

cries of the men stationed in Santiago raised the town from its slumber. Agustín de Yermo Aquero, the new alcalde mayor of the city, went quickly to his station in Santiago to organize a defense.

Meanwhile, Parker's men advanced along the shore toward the town. In an effort to cause confusion, the invaders set fire to the thatched huts that made up the suburb of Triana. Parker's forces ran through the burning streets, and, as he reported:

I . . . marched over a little brooke into the rich towne of Porto Bello; and comming directly up to the king's treasure-house, which is very faire and large, we found a squadron of souldiers (whereof there are two-hundred and fifty always belonging to the town) with two brass pieces of field ordnance which we presently possessed.⁶⁴

The English soon found themselves in some difficulty as Pedro Meléndez, the castellano of Santiago, with his 33 infantrymen, put up a good defense of the town. Meléndez, a skilled soldier having served in Panama for over five years, soon had the English in a compromised position.⁶⁵

Parker wrote of his troubles:

Pedro Melendez . . . had gathered sixty souldiers together, and comming toward a certain bridge to encounter me, I having not then above eight or nine men with mee to withstand them: but God did prosper our proceedings mightily. For the first two shot that went from us, shot Melendez through his target, and went through both his armes: and the other shot hurt the corporall of the field. Whereupon they all retired to the house, which they made good untill it was almost day.⁶⁶

Meanwhile the two other launches landed 120 men in the town, raising the English numbers to about 150 men (the Spanish estimated that the English had about 200 men).⁶⁷ Shortly after the reinforcements arrived, two English officers, Captain Giles and a lieutenant named Samuel Barnet, were both wounded.

Parker sent Captain Ward against the stronghold Meléndez had established. Ward's attack was successful, and Meléndez himself was made a prisoner--he had been wounded in eight places. Ward, however, did not come away unscathed: he took a bullet in the rear. During Ward's assault, Parker led another group of men against what the English called "the king's house." That the Spanish held out in the "king's house" for five hours is positive testimony as to the Spanish defense effort. Once the "king's house" fell, however, the rest of the city also capitulated. Although a large number of Spaniards escaped--including the alcalde mayor--numerous prisoners were taken.

Now in possession of Portobelo--but not of San Felipe or Santiago--Parker set about to secure the town against a possible counterattack. He had a barricade erected on the road leading to Panama and he posted guards around the periphery of the town. Several half-hearted attempts to retake the city were made by the Spanish, all of which were easily repulsed. Parker ordered Meléndez' wounds treated. The Spanish commander had impressed the English greatly with

his bravery and effectiveness--accordingly they treated him honorably and charged no ransom for his release. Parker's looting gained the English about 10,000 ducats worth of treasure, a disappointing figure in that the English had expected booty of over 5,000,000 ducats. Parker later wrote that if he had been in Portobelo just a week sooner he would have captured a fabulous sum of money.

Although Parker did not take San Felipe, he was able to report on its strength. He claimed that the complement of the castle was fifty men and the total number of cannon was 25, "a strong and stately castle." Parker also described the city as he found it. Figure 3-10 is the plan the English⁶⁸ drew for Richard Hakluyt. Parker's description is enlightening:

The stately and newly builded towne of Porto Belo . . . had two goodly churches in it fully finished, and six or seven faire streets, whereof two were full of all necessarie artificers, and of merchants, with three small forts on the towne's side, besides the great fort of Saint Philip on the other: when I might have speedily have consumed it all with fire, I willingly abstained from the same, knowing that though I could have done the King of Spaine exceedingly great hurt, and have undone a number of the inhabitants, yet the good that I should have done myself, and mine thereby should have beene very small in comparison of their damage. Only certaine out houses wherein their negros dwelt I caused to be burned to amaze and put them in fear: I also tooke two frigates of theirs which roade far up within the river, the one of them having in her three pieces of ordnance . . . with which ordnance we beate upon the enemy marching onto us from the western fort.⁶⁹

After the English were long gone, investigations were launched. Meléndez claimed that he had been unable to

protect the city owing to a shortage of gunpowder and other munitions, and indeed the Spanish captain was eventually
70
cleared of any guilt in the loss of the town.

Portobelo's defenses failed their first test, although it must be admitted that San Felipe was still far from finished and the fortaleza Santiago, as built, was only a shadow of Antonelli's original conception. Nevertheless, the Parker attack illustrated that the defense of Spain's Atlantic isthmian port--even if much improved over Nombre de Dios--still needed to be strengthened.

Notes

1

Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa, Description of the Indies, p. 304; Alfredo Castillero Calvo, personal communication, 20 May 1984 and América Hispana, pp. 7-20; María del Carmen Mena García, La Sociedad de Panamá en el siglo XVI, pp. 58-73, 147-159, 239-244.

2

"Interrogatorio para todas las ciudades, villas y lugares de Españoles, y pueblos de naturales de las Indias Occidentales, Islas, y Tierra Firme; al qual se ha de satisfacer, conforme a las preguntas siguientes, habiendolas averiguado en cada pueblo, con puntualidad y cuidado; Descripción corográfica de algunos lugares de las Indias, sacada de informaciones que estan en las secretarías del consejo, La Ciudad de Panama y La Ciudad de Portobelo, 1607" in Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista, y organización de América y Oceana, vol. ix, pp. 58-120.

3

Deposition of García de Paz in response to royal visita investigating foreign activity in Tierra Firme, in Documents Concerning English Voyages to the Spanish Main, I. A. Wright, ed., (London, 1932)(hereinafter referred to as English Voyages) pp. 20-25. Also see Kenneth Andrews, The Spanish Caribbean, Trade and Plunder, 1530-1630 (London, 1978) pp. 135-170, especially pp. 136-146. Andrews does, however, minimize the real threat to the isthmus, while recognizing the threat as serious from the Spanish perspective: "The threat to the isthmus was in fact weak--much weaker than the Spaniards assumed--but it was alarming enough and continued long enough to bring Panama the reinforcements it needed. . . . This was obviously a place of great strategic interest to the Spanish crown, since it contained the only major route from the Atlantic to the Pacific and the treasure of Peru. When endangered it therefore got the help it needed." (pp. 145-46). A good overview of the isthmus' importance in the context of the late sixteenth-century Caribbean defense problem can be found in A. P. Newton's classic study, The European Nations in the West Indies, 1493-1688 (London, 1933) pp. 80-108, especially pp. 86-93, 105.

4

Letter from Cristóbal de Salinas to the crown, 14 March 1571, AGI Panamá 33. Also published in English Voyages, pp. 16-17. This information is also related in a letter from Diego Flores de Valdés dated 16 March of the same year, AGI Panamá 33.

5

Cabildo of Panama to the crown, 25 May 1571, in English Voyages, pp. 31-35. Dutch corsairs were also active in and around Panama near the turn of the century, the first sea-beggars having arrived as early as 1572. See Cornelis CH. Goslinga, The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast, 1580-1680 (Gainesville, 1971) p. 54.

6

"(Oxenham) is a man of grave demeanour, much feared and respected and obeyed by his soldiers. They say that he is very happy to have opened a way from the Atlantic to the Pacific. He expects to be greatly rewarded by his queen for so doing and promises that next year he will enter there to settle with 2,000 men and make himself master of all this realm. . . ." Cabildo of Panama City to the Crown, 15 April 1577, AGI Panamá 41; also see deposition of Diego de Sotomayor relating to the capture of some of Oxenham's men during an attack on the Pearl Islands, 17 April 1577, AGI Patronato 265. Oxenham himself made an extensive deposition before Spanish Authorities after his capture, Deposition of John Oxenham, 20 October 1577, AGI Panamá 41. A brief account of Oxenham's activities in general is "The Voyage of

John Oxnam of Plimmouth to the West India, and over the Strait of Dariene into the South Sea, Anno 1575" in Richard Hakluyt, The Principal Navigations, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation (Glasgow, 1904) vol x, pp. 77-81. The Oxenham voyage is also discussed in Andrews, The Spanish Caribbean, pp. 141-44.

7

Letter from Nombre de Dios to the crown, 27 March 1570, AGI Panamá 13. This whole issue is discussed in Armando Fortune, "Los negros cimarrones en Tierra Firme y su lucha por la libertad," Revista Lotería 8: 172 and 173 (1970) pp. 32-53; pp. 16-39.

8

Ibid, Fortune p. 52. Also see letter from Cabildo of Panama to the crown, 25 May 1571 in English Voyages, pp. 31-35.

9

While there are no direct reports that Drake himself contracted the first of these so-called alliances, the first reports of such anti-Spanish collaboration date from the period of Drake's activity on the Isthmus. There is, however, substantial proof that Drake did in fact make use of such an alliance once it became custom. Without his cimarrón guides, Drake would not have been able to pull off his attack on the mule trains in 1573. See Philip Nichols Sir Francis Drake Revived in English Voyages, pp. 279-280. Also see John Oxenham's deposition before Spanish authorities at Panama, 20 October 1577, in AGI Panamá 41. Also note Andrew's discussion of cimarrón cooperation with interlopers, Spanish Caribbean, pp. 136-42, 144.

10

See letters surrounding the Loarte/Arana jurisdiction dispute in English Voyages, pp. 163-164, 168, 184-185, 225-226. The whole issue here centered around who had authority on the Isthmus with regard to an expedition sent by the Viceroy of Peru to deal with the cimarrones. Dr. Loarte, the president of the Audiencia at Panama claimed that Tierra Firme was under the jurisdiction of neither Peru nor New Spain--the Isthmus was, he claimed, a separate entity over which the governor of the kingdom had total authority. The dispute was referred to the crown, and the authority of the Viceroy was upheld.

11

The traditional account is referred to in note 9: Sir Francis Drake Revived in English Voyages, pp. 245-326. An interesting volume which discusses the Drake voyage is Mrs. Christian Isobel Johstone, Lives of Drake, Cavendish, and

Dampier (New York, 1833) pp. 58-62. Of course, Drake's activities on the isthmus are well discussed in Andrews, Spanish Caribbean, chapter iv, "Pirates and Privateers," pp. 134-170. John and Janet Hampden, Sir Francis Drake's Raid on the Treasure Trains, (Westminster, 1954).

12

Cabildo of Panama to the crown, 24 February 1573, in English Voyages pp. 48.

13

This assertion is supported by numerous documents in English Voyages: pp. 19, 30, 50, 70, 135, 139, 142, 165, 185-86, 203, 214, 221-22, 331. General discussion of this is to be found in Paul Hoffman, The Spanish Crown and the Defense of the Caribbean, pp. 179-195.

14

Hoffman, p. 181.

15

Ibid., pp. 185-186; officials of the fleet to the crown, 24 April 1579, AGI Indiferente General 1095; this continued to be an issue, see letter of cabildo of Portobelo to crown, 15 July 1622, AGI Panamá 32.

16

AGI Contaduría 1459, fols. 247-55; Contaduría 1460, fol. 223.

17

Letter of the cabildo of Nombre de Dios to the crown, 6 May 1583, AGI Panamá 32. On shortages of cannon also see J. H. Parry, The Age of Reconnaissance, Carla Rahn Phillips, Six Galleons, pp. 69-72, and Hoffman, Defense of the Caribbean, pp. 169-171.

18

Hoffman, Defense of the Caribbean, pp. 202-203. As early as 1569 Francisco Toledo, on his way to Peru, recommended moving Nombre de Dios, Francisco de Toledo to the crown, 12 August 1569, AGI Panamá 39; also see María del Carmen Mena García, "El traslado de la ciudad de Nombre de Dios a Portobelo a fines del siglo XVI," in Anuario de estudios americanos 40 (1982) pp. 71-102, especially p. 81.

An excellent summary of the sixteenth-century fortification of the Caribbean is Hoffman, pp. 152-169. Regarding Nombre de Dios Hoffman writes, "The story of Nombre de Dios is simply told. In 1556 the crown issued orders for its construction, but work began only in 1561 with the purchase of a few slaves and tools and the cutting of 545

blocks of stone. However, there was no mason to begin the delicate job of setting the first courses on the reef. The work was ordered or requested again the next year and in 1568, 1569, and 1574, but nothing came of it. . . . Not even Drake's raid of 1572 and the subsequent problems with the Cimarrons produced energetic actions. Nombre de Dios continued to be defended by earthworks and troops from Panama." p. 165.

19

The best volume on Antonelli is Diego Angulo Iníñez, Bautista Antonelli, las fortificaciones americanas del siglo XVI (Madrid, 1942).

20

Angulo Iníñez, p.4.

21

Antonelli to the crown, 1587 in Hakluyt, vol. x, pp. 142-48.

28

My translation of Oscar A. Velarde B., "Notas historicas sobre Nombre de Dios," in Revista patrimonio histórico 2:1 (1978) pp. 115-132. This writer made a brief survey of the Nombre de Dios site in June 1984. Ceramic remains indicate that the occupied area was very small. Roof tile remains are concentrated in a small area behind the small cerro upon which the gun platform of the city was located.

23

"Traza adonde parece que conviene que se haga la fortaleza de Nombre de Dios," AGI Mapas y Planos Panamá 1. This map was found with a letter from Vaca de Castro dated 2 March 1541.

24

See Antonelli letter of 1587 in Hakluyt. The following discussion the based on this letter.

25

This is also discussed in Angulo Iníñez, pp. 12, 42-45; and also in Juan Manuel Zapatero, Historia del Castillo San Lorenzo el Real de Chagre (Madrid, 1985) pp. 51-60; also see María del Carmen Mena García, "El traslado," pp. 14-19.

26

"Plano del Puerto de Portovelo y de las fortificaciones que se habian de hacer para su defensa," AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 12.

27

Geodetic Survey Series E762, Sheet no. 42441, Portobelo, Panamá.

28

See J.F. King, "Documents. Admiral Vernon at Portobelo" in HAHR 23 (1943) pp. 258-282; A Geographical and Historical Description of the Principal Objects of the Present War in the West Indies, n.a. (London, 1741). See chapter .

29

Antonelli letter in Hakluyt, p. 147

30

Plano del Puerto de Portovelo y de las fortificaciones que se habian de hacer para su defensa," AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 12.

31

Angulo Iníñez, pp. 30-60.

32

Cristóbal de Roda was Antonelli's cousin. De Roda eventually took over Antonelli's work in Portobelo. See Antonelli family tree, *ibid.*, p. 4.

33

Antonelli received the cédula on 9 June 1594. See Angulo Iníñez, p. 89. Also see p. 60.

34

ANP, Documents from the AGI copied by Juan Antonio Susto (hereinafter referred to as Susto Documents) , vol. xii, document 227; AGI Contaduría 1506, fols. 28-37.

35

AGI, Contaduría 1506, see especially folios 164-70, 330-342, 360, 474-476.

36

Ibid., folio 474b.

37

See Angulo Iníguez, p. 66. One writer has calculated a regular death rate at Nombre de Dios--and probably this did not differ at Portobelo--of between seven and eight percent, María del Carmen Meno García, "El traslado," p. 82.

38

Angulo Iníguez, p. 64; Zapatero, San Lorenzo p. 51.

39

ANP, Cédula of 20 November 1597; also "autos de la Audiencia de Panama y otros ministros," AGI Panamá 14.

40

Vázquez de Espinosa, p. 304.

41

AGI Contaduría 1506, folios 306-307; again, see Phillips Six Galleons, pp. 69-70.

42

AGI Contaduría 1506, folios 308-313.

43

Ibid., folio 310a.

44

Ibid., folio 311a; Also see ANP, cédula of 9 March 1600 and AGI Contaduría 1506 folios 305-306 (report of 25 December 1595).

45

Letter of 15 May 1595 from Portobelo, AGI Patronato 193. Again see Newton, The European Nations in the West Indies, 1493-1688 which frequently discusses the strategic significance of the isthmus in general, pp. 55, 59, 87, 112, 263-65, 321. The term "llave" is used extensively by Zapatero, in San Lorenzo. See especially pp. 44-45.

46

Letter from Antonelli to the king regarding fortifications of 11 July 1595, AGI, Panamá 44.

47

Hakluyt, vol. vii, p. 193.

48

AGI Panamá 376, letter of 1596. This letter is referred to in Cartas de cabildos hispanoamericanos: Audiencia de Panamá (Sevilla, 1978), p. 19. Also see letter of Manuel Fernández to the crown, 1596, AGI Panamá 14, and María del Carmen Mena García, "El Traslado," pp. 93-99.

49

Within a few years Nombre de Dios was overgrown with jungle. The site was not to be reoccupied until the twentieth century.

50

ANP, cédula of 24 February 1597. Also see ANP, Susto Documents, vol. xii, document 227.

51

"Planta del castillo de San Felipe de Sotomayor," AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 13, and "Planta del castillo de S. Felipe de Sotomayor en la forma y traza que queda en 28 de Marco de este año de 1600, lo cual señala las paredes queban de tinta y todo lo que en ellas esta señalado es la obra que esta acabada con los parapetos," AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 15.

52

"Lado del castillo de San Felipe de Puertobelo que mira fuera a la mar con la elebacion del terreno y alto que de presente le queda a la muralla medio sin parapeto," AGI, Mapas y Planos, Panamá 16.

53

"Acta del asiento de la Primera Piedra del Castillo de Sotomayor de Portobelo," AGI Panamá 44; Alfredo Castellero Calvo, "Portobelo: apuntos para un libro en preparación," in Revista partimonio histórico 2:1 (1978) pp. 133-200, especially pp. 138-39.

54

Angulo Iníñez, p. 76.

55

ANP, Susto Documents, vol. x document 193, "Tracta de fabricas y guerra de Tierra Firme," 1600.

56

"Plano de la ciudad y puerto de Portobelo," AGI Mapas y Planos Panamá 17.

57

"Planta de la traza de la ciudad nueva fortificar que se propone en Portobelo," AGI Mapas y Planos Panamá 18.

58

Alfredo Castellero Calvo, "Portobelo, apuntes para un libro en preparación," p. 149.

59

ANP, Susto Documents, vol. x document 193, "Tracta de fabricas y guerra de Tierra Firme," 1600.

60

"Planta de lo que se ha de añadir a la plataforma de Santa Barbara", AGI Mapas y Planos Panamá 14; ANP, Susto Documents, vol. x, document 193, "Tracta de fabricas y guerra de Tierra Firme," 1600.

61

William Parker, "The taking of St. Vincent and Puerto Bello" in Samuel Purchas, Purchas His Pilgrimes (Glasgow, 1906), vol. xvi, pp. 292-296. Parker's other Caribbean exploits are documented elsewhere: his attacks on Puerto de Caballos in 1594 and 1595 are recounted in English Privateering Voyages to the West Indies, 1588-1595, Kenneth Andrews, ed. (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 308-325; the 1597 attack on Campeche is described in Román Piña Chan, Campeche durante el período colonial (Mexico City, 1977) p. 51. The narration presented in this study comes from Parker's own account (cited above). For an international diplomatic perspective on English activity in the Caribbean in the years immediately before and after the turn of the sixteenth century, see Kenneth Andrews, "Caribbean Rivalry and the Anglo-Spanish Peace of 1604," in History 59:195 (1974) pp. 1-17, especially pp. 4-5.

62

Parker, p. 293.

63

ANP, Susto Documents, vol. xii Document 225, expediente regarding the Parker invasion, 1603; testimony of Domingo Gómez, cantero at Santiago.

64

Parker, p. 294.

65

ANP, Susto Documents, vol. xi, document 201, initial results of investigation of Parker's entrada, 1601; also see Parker, p. 294; ANP, Susto Documents, vol. xii document 225, 1603 expediente.

66

Parker, p. 294.

67

Ibid.; and ANP, 1603 expediente.

68

See Anderson, Old Panama and Castilla del Oro, p. 395.

69

Parker, p. 296.

70

ANP, Susto Documents, vol. xii, document 225.

THE DEFENSES OF
EARLY SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PORTOBELLO

During the 50 or so years after the founding of Portobello--to about 1650--the Tierra Firme branch of the Carrera de Indias remained the most profitable part of the economically constricting Hispanic World Empire. While New Spain entered a period of severe depression that would persist until the eighteenth century, the isthmus, ever tied to the still commercially viable southern viceroyalty, saw no real slacking of in traffic before the middle of the seventeenth century. Continued prosperity resulted in continued concern for the defense of Tierra Firme and the Carrera de Indias ports. The Parker attack, however, illustrated the weakness of the keystone of the Peru-Spain trade arch. The usually lethargic government of Philip III acted in what even apologists must call uncharacteristic quickness--by 1607, only six years after Parker's intrusion, Portobello was one of the best defended ports in the Indies.

Castillo Santiago de la Gloria.

In the year 1600, just before Parker's attack, Montoya had submitted a plan to the Council of the Indies for a new

fortress to be built on the south shore--a fort which would provide the tactical advantages of Antonelli's original south-shore fortress scheme.¹ Figure 4-1 is a reproduction of Montoya's plan. The fort, like the small fortaleza to the west of the city, was named after St. James. The plan called for two separate constructions, the principal of which--as in the case of the other Portobelo forts--was to be an extensive lower battery near the seashore. The core of the lower section was a large plaza which was to front the various rooms of the castle. Above the lower battery was to be a tower to protect the rear of the castle. This initial plan of Santiago de la Gloria, as the fort came to be called, shows no connecton between the tower and the lower battery. Later plans, however, called for the two to be combined into one massive construction.

The site selected for the fortress was known as the cerro de chorilla, which lies about 500 feet west of the colonial city--it marks the edge of the present twentieth-century town. It was chosen because it commanded the major part of the bahía and because of its proximity to the inhabited areas of the bay.² Moreover, the cerro de chorilla was the only place on the south shore with sufficient level ground to allow for the construction of a sizable fort. There is no evidence that the construction of Santiago de la Gloria was beyond the discussion stage at the time of

Parker's attack. After the English invasion, however, and certainly by January, 1603, significant work was underway.

Montoya, like Antonelli before him, returned to Spain, surrendering his cargo to Captain Enriburcio Españoles who became the ingeniero mayor in 1602.³ Españoles, however, did not expect to remain in his position for long, as Antonelli's return to the Isthmus was expected with the arrival of each fleet. The Italian never did return to the New World, but the work at Portobelo went on without him.

Don Alonso de Sotomayor sent a strongly worded letter to the crown shortly after the Parker invasion in which he described the shortage of funds for construction of the defenses of Portobelo. Referring to both San Felipe and Santiago de la Gloria, he wrote, "para estas fabricas no hay un peso. . . ."⁴ He added that work at Portobelo was unusually expensive because of sickness and death among the workers and soldiers. Troops, he wrote, flowed through the place on the way to their graves like water from a "spigot." In response to these pleas, the crown ordered that an additional 20,000 ducats be taken from the hacienda real of Panama to fund the constructions, and by 1603 they were at full swing and quite in debt.⁵

A report dated 28 January 1603 states that Santiago de la Gloria was far along the road to being finished, with the bastions of San Antonio and San Francisco completed (they measured 400 by 20 varas) and four pieces of artillery

already in position in the tower.⁶ The plan submitted by Montoya, meanwhile, had gone through many changes. The fort as finished in 1607 is depicted in figure 4-2 and can be seen to differ greatly from the plan shown in figure 4-1.⁷ The main plaza of the 1600 plan remained intact, as did the basic concept for the lower bastions; the upper reaches of the fort, however, are seen in figure 4-2 to be connected to the lower levels by means of extensive stairs and covered ways. At the junction between the lower and upper sections of the castle were two small guard towers. Here was also located a second artillery platform and troop quarters. Above this area, directly below the tower, was the upper battery which was flanked by stairs leading to the top of the fort. Santiago de la Gloria was originally built to hold sixteen pieces of artillery, the bulk of which was located in the lower bastions, with the upper platforms containing only four pieces of small calibre.⁸

Concurrent with the construction of Santiago de la Gloria, was continued work on San Felipe, which--it will be remembered--was not finished at the time of the Parker attack. Further alterations were made on the plans to save money, mainly the bastions of Santa María and Austria being truncated to the point of being indiscernible on a plan drawn in 1620 (figure 4-3), which depicts the fort as finished in 1607.⁹ Shortly after Santiago de la Gloria and San Felipe

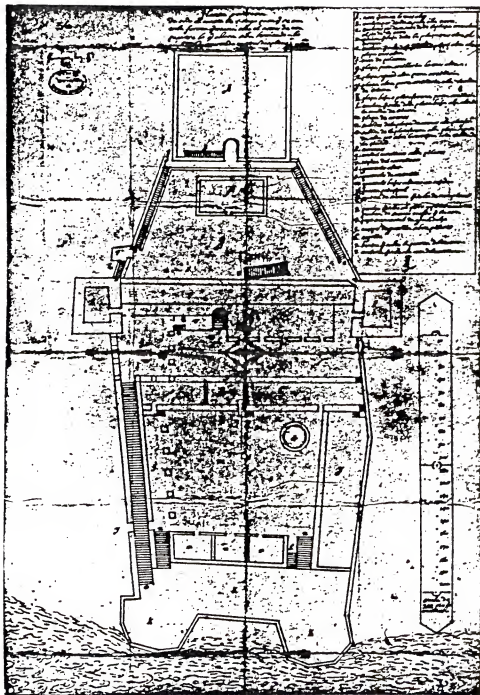


Figure 4-2 Santiago de la Gloria (Source: AGI/MP Panama 56)



Figure 4-3 Castillo San Felipe (Source: AGI/MP Panama 34)

were completed, the fortaleza Santiago was abandoned, never to be reoccupied.

Alterations and Reconstructions, 1607-1640.

With the completion of San Felipe and Santiago de la Gloria in 1607, Portobelo's defensive facade was shaped into the form it retained until the mid-eighteenth century; figure 4-4 is a map of the harbor drawn in 1626 which illustrates this basic defensive layout. San Felipe and Santiago de la Gloria are both clearly indicated,¹⁰ and still another fortress can be observed in the east end of the bay, described in the legend, "castillo que se puede hacer en el vajo." No action, however, would be taken upon the fortification of this area for fifty more years.

The construction of the city and its fortresses had cost the crown a great amount of money. Non-construction expenses at Portobelo, however, while significantly less after 1607, were still quite high. Table 4-1 represents a summary of some yearly expenses, mainly wages, at Portobelo in 1607.¹¹ As can be observed, annual expenses from wages alone were well over 50,000 pesos, a figure which does not include supplies, ammunition, structural maintenance, civil administration and a host of other public expenses. A presumption of total expenses in excess of 100,000 pesos per year would not be unreasonable.

Table 4-1

Yearly Defense Expenses (mainly wages) at Portobelo, 1607
(in pesos corrientes)

1	Captain of the Harbor	500p
2	Castellanos	2,400p
2	Alferezes	864p
2	Sargentos	600p
8	Squadron Leaders	2,080p
180	Soldados	39,744p
2	Padres	500p
60	Gunners	14,760p
30	Pikemen	7,200p
1	Artillery Captain	432p
16	Artillery men	4,704p
--	Hospital Expenses	8,000p
<hr/>		
	Castellano of San Lorenzo	935p
	Wage of the Sargento Mayor of Tierra Firme	1,200p
	Priest of San Lorenzo	547p
	Assistant to the Sargento Mayor	360p
	Special pay to Capt. Boa	1,200p
<hr/>		
Total yearly defense wages at Portobelo		81,757p
Total defense wages of Tierra Firme (Portobelo + San Lorenzo and Panama)		97,867p

Note: from Archivo Nacional de Panamá, collection of documents from Sevilla copied by Juan Antonio Susto vol. xii, document 227; 1607 col. pp. 193-94.

The number of troops stationed in Portobelo was rather constant during the so-called tiempo muerto, or the slow times between the arrival and stays of the fleets. In the early seventeenth century Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa reported that San Felipe was manned by sixty soldiers plus an unreported number of artillery men, assistants, and artisans in the employ of the military authorities.¹² Another report dated the same year as Vázquez de Espinosa's, 1607, lends support to his figures, reading in part, "Destos soldados estan en el Castillo de San Felipe 50, y en el de Santiago 130. . . ." ¹³ These numbers are also corroborated by information presented in table 4-1: in addition to the 180 soldiers on duty in the port, numbers for pikemen, gunners, artillerymen and officers are given, bringing the total head count of the military component of Portobelo's population to 302. [During the fair time, the military population of the port expanded so much that the construction of rows of temporary troop quarters in a field between the town and Santiago de la Gloria was required (the area called Triana which was burned by Parker).] No estimates have been published regarding the number of troops that arrived at Portobelo with the armadas during the fair times, but it can be assumed that the number was well in excess of 2,000 if garrisons on individual ships alone are counted.¹⁴ This large infusion of men of arms caused great problems for the

few actual vecinos of Portobelo, whose food supplies, hospital facilities, and housing areas were quite insufficient to handle the expanded, if only transient,¹⁵ population. Social relations between the civilian and military populations were not always good--a 1609 letter from the cabildo to the crown, for instance, related that disorders and aggravations resulting from drunken exploits increased during the time of the fairs, when the military¹⁶ population was at its height.

Troops and laborers were in the usual short supply during the period after the initial constructions. While work on fortifications had essentially stopped by 1607, slaves were still needed for the extensive public works in the city itself. For example, in 1611, slaves which had been in use maintaining the forts were handed over to the civil authorities to supply labor for the construction of the new stone aduana. In an effort to alleviate the problem, in 1617 Captain Cristóbal de Guerra y Solís requested permission to bring two shiploads of slaves to the city each year to replace losses in the labor force resulting from sickness and¹⁷ death. Disease hit the troops at Portobelo as well as slaves and vecinos: in 1631, 130 soldiers were sent from Spain to replace empty bunks in both San Felipe and Santiago de la Gloria, and when Thomas Gage was in Portobelo in 1637 he claimed to have witnessed the death of 500 troops who had arrived with the flota of that year, a statistic which seems

possible despite Gage's tendency to exaggerate.¹⁸ Shortages of forces from sickness and death were so significant that in 1623, when news arrived that an enemy force had been spotted off Cartagena, the cabildo of Portobelo went into panic,¹⁹ writing to the king that the city was defenseless.

Because the north coast was so disease-ridden, Portobelo never had more than a few vecinos as permanent residents. Shortly after the city was moved from Nombre de Dios the number of vecinos stood at 30, falling to as low as 12 by the 1620s. Those that did live in Portobelo seem to have been stuck there, too poor to make the move to Panama City. Even Portobelo's houses were owned by vecinos of the audiencia capital. Indeed, the poverty of the vecinos of Portobelo--and thus of the town as a whole--was the main theme of many letters from the cabildo to Spain.²⁰ In these letters the portobeleños make various requests to alleviate the financial burden they faced from imperial taxation. For example, numerous requests were made to free Portobelo's residents from alcabala and almojarifazgo assessments. On other occasions, the vecinos were more imaginative, proposing such things as the crown giving portobeleños exclusive rights to navigate the Río Chagres.²¹ These requests, however, seem

never to have been granted, for year after year--indeed, well into the late seventeenth-century--the letters read the same.

Because so few vecinos lived in Portobelo, the city's population was largely made up of Black slaves, most of whom

lived in collections of grass huts just outside the city limits—not that Portobelo itself was much better. The slave population of Portobelo numbered something over 1,000 for most of the *trajín* era. They were used not only in the almost continuous military construction activities, but also in gangs that maintained the caminos to Panama. During fairs, moreover, these slaves performed the important task of unloading cargoes from ships in the harbor.

[It is important to keep in mind that even at its height, Portobelo was not a great city. There were only a few stone buildings (other than the forts), most of the houses made from wood or palms. But Portobelo was not significant in and of itself. The fortifications were not built to protect the dozen or so *vecinos* that lived there, instead they were constructed to provide defenses for the fair, during which the population swelled to perhaps as many as 10,000 and the streets were lined with the wealth of the South American viceroyalty. When the fair was over, Portobelo returned to being a miserable collection of huts permeated by pestilence and poverty.]

In addition to shortages of *vecinos* and money, shortages of ammunition also haunted the *castellanos* of the forts. Gun powder, supplied from Quito, never seems to have been scarce, the trade routes between Panama and the southern viceroyalty being well travelled and, at this time, relatively free from

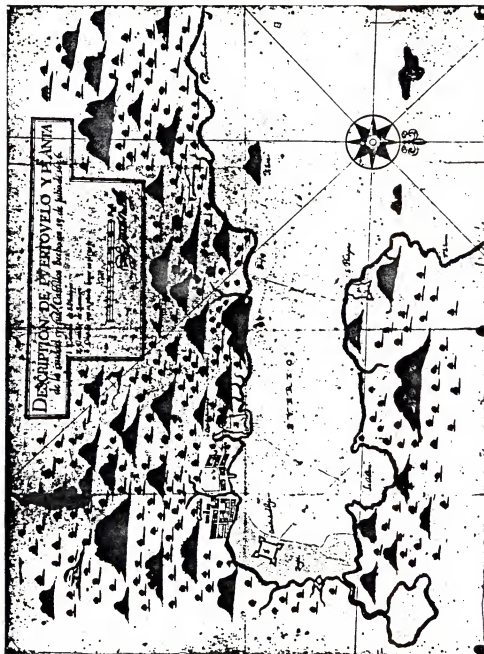


Figure 4-4 Map of Portobelo Harbor, 1626 (Source: AGI/MP Panama 42)

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foreign threats. Cannon, on the other hand, were still in short supply throughout the Indies: two cédulas dating from 1611 deal with instructions to the commander of the armada of that year ordering him to carry a special order of Sevillian artillery to Portobelo.²³ Sevillian cannon were among the best Spain produced, cast in the brass foundry in that city--brass guns were far superior to iron cannon cast in either the New World or Spain. Iron artillery was especially susceptible to the rigors of the humid tropical climate found at Portobelo. As early as 1608 iron cannon on the Isthmus were in such poor condition that the crown ordered the officials of the royal treasury to sell off the rusted weapons to the highest bidder and to use the profits to purchase supplies for the garrisons.²⁴

The climate at Portobelo took a high toll on the new castles as well. Santiago de la Gloria, just finished in 1607, was in dire need of repairs by 1609 because of rotting in the wooden beams which supported the weight of most of the vaults. A report from that same year urged that the support beams be remade from more durable materials.²⁵ In the same document can also be found the first recorded recommendations for alterations in Santiago as built in the first decade of the century, calling for tile coverings on the stairways connecting the lower battery with the tower. In 1626 another document instructing a commission to inspect the castles of San Felipe, Santiago de la Gloria, and San Lorenzo at the

mouth of the Río Chagres and report on their conditions²⁶
indicated the fortifications were in a deteriorated state.

On other occasions, royal authorities in Spain sent out visitadores to inspect the defensive status of the Isthmus. Ever fearful of fraud, the crown often directed that these investigations be oriented towards the discovery and prevention of the misuse of funds rather than the tactical or strategic defense problems.²⁷

In 1620 a plan was drawn up by Antonelli's nephew, Cristóbal de Roda, which outlined recommendations for major revisions of the lower batteries of Santiago de la Gloria.²⁸

This plan is presented in figure 4-5. The significant proposals involved the bastions of San Francisco and San Antonio. Perhaps resulting from increased drains on the Spanish treasury owing to the escalated level of conflict in Europe which came about as a consequence of the expiration of the Dutch truce in 1621, no action was taken on de Roda's proposals for several years.²⁹

Then, another plan, this one dating from 1626 (figure 4-6), repeats the de Roda recommendations, while additionally calling for extensive revisions in the guard towers flanking the upper gun decks; but as in the case of the 1620 plan, no action was taken to improve what were now generally recognized design flaws in the south shore fortress.³⁰

In 1637 still another proposal was submitted which not only called for the Montoya bastions to be reshaped, but also for them to be greatly expanded in

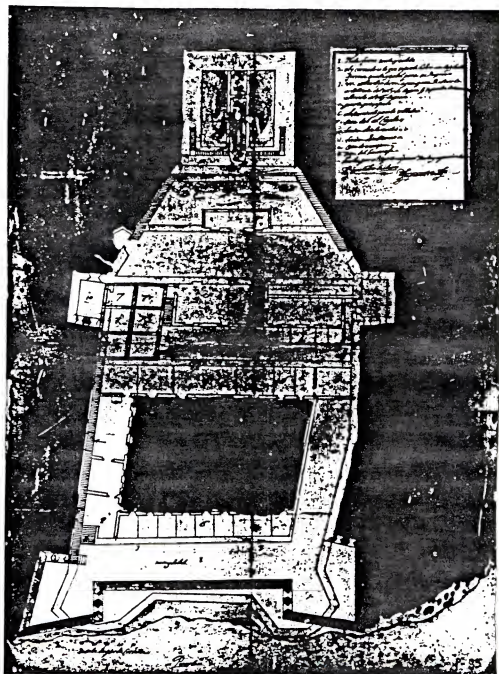


Figure 4-5 Santiago de la Gloria (Source: AGI/MP Panama 35)

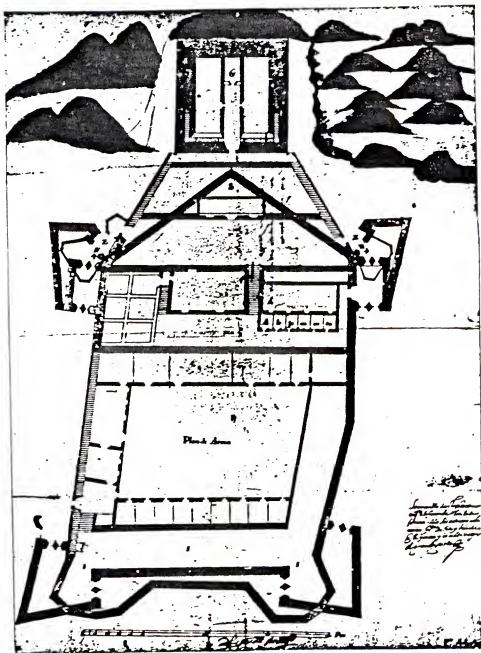


Figure 4-6 Santiago de la Gloria (Source: AGI/MP Panama 44)

size. Also the curtains enclosing the main plaza were to be rebuilt and made more regular in form. This plan is presented as figure 4-7. A final version of this proposal (figure 4-8) was adopted, and reconstruction began in earnest³¹ in 1638. An interesting diagram of the construction details of work carried out on Santiago de la Gloria at this time has been found in the Archivo General de Indias and is reproduced here as figure 4-9.³² The drawing shows the nature of the filler material found under the new parapets--also shown are the "bombproofs" built under the curtains between the bastions. This vault construction was typical of Spanish New World fortifications--it was an important component in the structural features of the Morros of San Juan and Habana, of Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine, of San Juan de Ulloa in Veracruz, and in numerous other castillos throughout the Caribbean. Albert Manucy and Luis Arana well describe the "bombproofs" in their short study on Castillo de San Marcos:

The tops of the ponderous vaults were leveled off with a fill of coquina chips and sand. Tabby mortar was poured onto the surface, and tamperers beat the mixture smooth. After the first layer set, another and another were added until the pavement was six inches thick. The whole roof was thus made into a gun deck, and cannon were (not) restricted to the bastions alone. For unlike the old raftered roof, the new terreplein was buttressed by construction that could take tremendous weight and terrific shock; and masonry four feet thick protected the rooms underneath from bombardment.³³

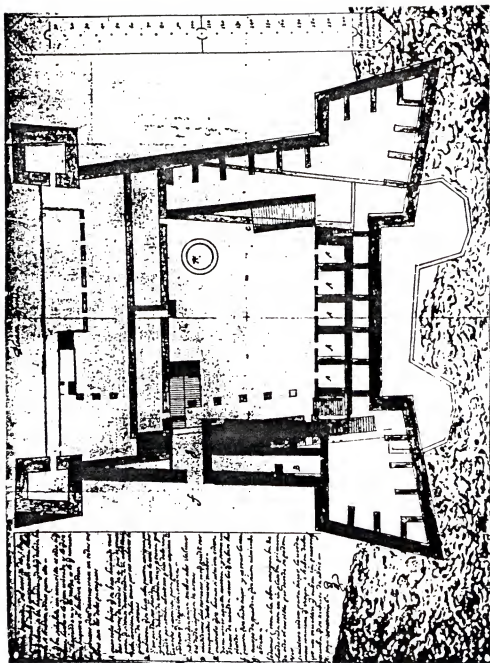


Figure 4-7 Lower Bastion of Santiago de la Gloria (Source: AGI/MP Panama 57)

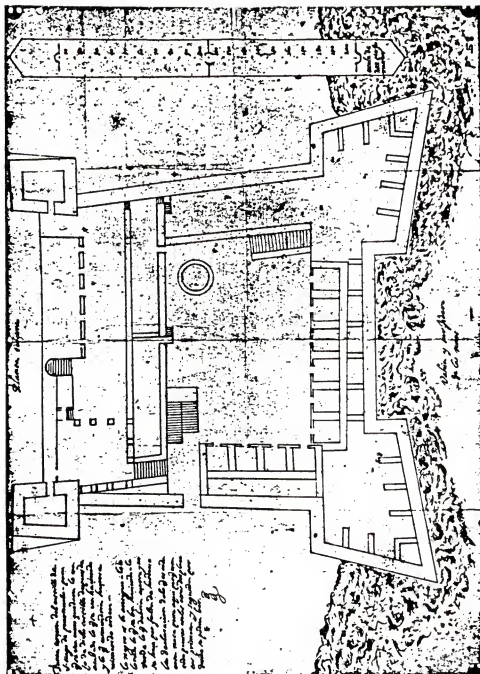


Figure 4-8 Lower Bastion of Santiago de la Gloria (Source: AGI/MP Panama 58)

The revisions of Santiago de la Gloria were finished by 1639: figure 4-10 depicts the fortress as rebuilt, and in the form it would retain for exactly 100 years.³⁴ Aside from the extended bastions, the most important revision was a new parapet which provided defenses against land attacks from the west side of the south shore. The orientation of the castillo's bastions did not permit a concentration of fire into the mouth of the harbor, perhaps indicating that Santiago de la Gloria, even if the largest castle at Portobelo, at this time was considered a second line of defense which would play an important role in the protection of the port only should San Felipe be breached. If such was indeed the assumption, subsequent attacks in the last half of the seventeenth century would show this thinking to be flawed.

Castillo San Gerónimo

[In the mid-1640s the crown saw a need to restructure the entire defenses of Tierra Firme's northern coast.] Orders were sent out on 21 August 1646 calling for a new inspection of the Isthmus fortresses to first find out their condition and then determine if one of the Portobelo forts should be taken down and a new fort built.³⁵ [Plans were prepared soon thereafter to take down Santiago de la Gloria and build a new fort in the stinking mud flats which extended out from the mouth of the Río Cascajal at the east end of Portobelo bay.]

Plans for such a mid-water fort were circulated by de Roda as early as 1626; he estimated the cost of such a castillo to be some 93,099 pesos.³⁶ This figure, incidentally, took into account savings that would accrue from the demolition of Santiago de la Gloria and the use of cut stone from the older fortress. In 1649, in response to the 1646 orders sent out by the crown, Juan de Echevería put new life into the de Roda proposals. By 1653 it was decided that some form of mid-water fort should be built. Given the name San Gerónimo, work began on a stone foundation in the soft mud. Some 200 feet from shore, in water two or three feet deep, the stone foundation was sufficiently underway by 1656 for construction to commence on the fort's walls.

Initial plans drawn up under the care of the President of the Audiencia of Panama, Fernando de la Riva Aguerro, called for a large structure clearly intended to replace Santiago de la Gloria as the principal south shore fortress. The main platform of San Gerónimo was to hold thirteen cannon: two at eighteen pounds; five at eight pounds; four at six pounds; and two at three pounds--in all a rather sizable line of artillery. By 1663 the walls of the fort were nine feet above the waterline, but it was a height above which they would never rise: in that year the first castellano of San Gerónimo, Pedro de Arredondo, estimated that to finish the castle would cost some 200,000 pesos.³⁷ Modifications,

as can be guessed by those familiar with the nature of the Spanish budget in the 1660's, were not long in coming. Plans were scaled down, and castillo San Gerónimo became fortaleza San Gerónimo. It goes without saying that plans to abandon Santiago de la Gloria were cancelled when San Gerónimo was recast as a smaller fort. Parts of the fort were finished in wood, with plans to convert these areas to stone as soon as funds became available. Much of the work on the fort dating from the time when a large castle was still envisioned was taken down, resulting in long delays in finishing the structure. Figures 4-11 and 4-12 depict plans for the fort dating from 1666, by which time San Gerónimo had been redesignated as a minor addition to the defenses of the port.³⁸ On both figures the gun deck facing the entrance to the bay, planned in part to alleviate the situation caused by the poor orientation of Santiago de la Gloria's lower batteries, is labeled 'A.' The rear of the fort ('L')--that part facing the marshes of the San Cristóbal site was not structured to conform to standard bastion-curtain design--it was, in short, virtually defenseless, but an attack from that quarter was considered very unlikely. The side of the fort fronting the town was equally unprotected--the officials of Portobelo never envisioned San Gerónimo as a last-stand position in case the city should fall. Within the fort were quarters for soldiers ('F' on figure 4-11; 'D' on figure 4-

12), a powder magazine ('G' on 4-11), a large church ('H' on 4-11; 'B' on 4-12), and a cuero de guardia ('E' on 4-11; 'C' on 4-12).

Henry Morgan and the English Attack of 1668

The era of the construction of San Gerónimo brings us to one of the legendary events in the history of Panama--the capture of Portobelo by the Welshman, Henry Morgan, in 1668. The story of Morgan at Portobelo has been told and mistold on numerous occasions, beginning with the narration of John Esquemeling, a Dutch surgeon--whatever that meant in those days--who sailed with Morgan on many of his expeditions against the Spanish Main, an account which was first published in the 1680's.³⁹ Serious doubt can be cast upon Esquemeling's description of events at Portobelo in 1668. The noted British historian Peter Earle has recently speculated that Esquemeling was not with Morgan at all on the 1668 voyage, and that instead he relied on the inaccurate accounts given him by those who had participated in the action.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, most historians who have looked at the issue of buccaneering and pirating--including Haring--have depended too exclusively on Esquemeling's stories and have, at least in the case of the events of 1668, further spread what has been little more than an exciting adventure story à la Howard Pyle and Robert Louis Stevenson.⁴¹ Earle's book, entitled The Sack of Panama, has broken with the

Esquemeling-inspired myths and instead has traced the actual tale of Morgan's attack on Portobelo through Spanish documentation. Although the most important historian of colonial Panama alive today, Alfredo Castillero Calvo, has criticized Earle's study as being to "popular," this writer has found The Sack of Panama to be of much use. Most of the documentation on the Morgan invasion, documentation that Earle has well exploited, can be found in high concentrations⁴² in three or four legajos in the Archivo General de Indias.

On the eve of the Morgan attack, with the exception of the addition of San Gerónimo to the defensive landscape, the portrait of Portobelo had changed little since the 1620's, but the number of troops deployed in the city's castles, always a highly variable element in the defense equation, in 1668 was substantially below maximum levels: Santiago de la Gloria had a near full complement of one hundred and twenty men to man its thirty-two guns; San Felipe, however, had only fifty men to call to its twelve guns; San Gerónimo--still in a state of construction--was regularly manned by only eight men, just two more than were on guard duty at the aduana and other public buildings in the city itself. In addition to these forces, the citizens of Portobelo had been organized into a militia such as existed at so many other Caribbean locations. The militia of Portobelo numbered some 129 men who were divided into 4 divisions along racial lines, with

divisions of slaves, of free blacks, of mulattoes, and of white vecinos. The Portobelo militia, however, proved to be no better than any other militia in the Spanish Indies, and thus can be discounted from any consideration of effective defense units.⁴³

The regular troops on duty had not been paid wages in eighteen months, and although one has to wonder what they would have spent their cash on in Portobelo, this seems to have contributed to what was never a singularly astounding level of eagerness to combat the foes of the king of Spain.⁴⁴ Further hindering the defense of the port was the low level of military supplies in the forts, the stores of powder and shot being seriously short. Of small arms, the quantity was sufficient as the fleet of the previous year had replenished the store, and an inspection of the artillery in the castles made in 1667 found the cannon to be in good condition, considering the climate. All in all, however, and in spite of these accumulated problems, Portobelo was the third or fourth best defended port in the New World, ranking only behind Cartagena, Habana, and perhaps Veracruz and San Juan.

The buccaneers were no small force themselves. Under the enterprising if not always orthodox command of Henry Morgan, the armada that sailed against the Isthmus initially had some 12 vessels and over 1,000 men. Once Morgan announced to his captains that he intended to sail against Portobelo, however, almost half the contingent--mostly

Frenchmen--chose to quit the fleet and sail against some
⁴⁵ lesser, undefended port. Morgan, however, knew of the poor
 condition of Portobelo's defenses because he had encountered
 a boatload of Englishmen who had been held prisoner at
 Portobelo and used as slaves in the construction of San
 Gerónimo. These men informed the buccaneers of the general
 manpower situation in Portobelo, and of the shortage in
 munitions there which would certainly affect the outcome of
 an invasion. Most of Morgan's 500 remaining men were
 English, although there were over 40 Dutchmen and some
 French, Portugese, and blacks--together with at least one
⁴⁶ Spaniard.

The English plan of attack assumed the impossibility of
 sailing head-on into Portobelo past both San Felipe and
 Santiago de la Gloria--they knew that the crossfire from
 these two castles could quickly destroy their ships.
 Accordingly, Morgan's plan called for an assault from the
 landward side of the city. Morgan also perceived that if he
 was to bring off his coup he would have to make best use of
 surprise. To achieve this the English left their ships forty
 leagues from their target and transferred themselves into
 twenty-three canoes which had been carried from Jamaica
 (they had been captured on a previous expedition to Cuba) for
 this purpose. As each canoe was about forty feet in length,
⁴⁷ Morgan had no trouble transporting his whole contingent.

They travelled along the deserted coast of the Isthmus for several days, passing the mouth of the Río Chagres and the fortress San Lorenzo on the night of 10 June 1668.

Morgan's canoe flotilla was preceded by a supply ship which sailed a short time before the main force. The covert nature of the adventure was almost compromised when on the day before the attack this ship was sighted off a small island near Portobelo by a gang of black workers who had been cutting wood on the top of one of the high hills behind the city. As no Spanish ships were expected, the sighting of the vessel raised a few eyebrows in town, although the oficiales reales did not consider its presence cause for full alarm. A small boat from the port was dispatched to ascertain the nature of the mysterious ship, but as the distance was great, no word was expected back until the next day. At about two o'clock in the morning this Spanish boat came across Morgan's canoes on their final approach to Portobelo. The Spanish, realizing what was about to happen, made off towards shore to give warning. The Spanish were faster and were able to forge ahead of their English pursuers. Portobelo, however, was still some distance away.

Morgan's group quickly moved ashore at Buenaventura, a few miles from Portobelo. The English had been augmented by the addition of several escaped slaves from Portobelo who, as in the days of Drake, served as guides. The buccaneers turned towards the town, arriving within shooting distance of

a small outpost about a mile from Santiago de la Gloria. The six or so soldiers in this entrenchment decided not to surrender to the overwhelming enemy, but instead began to fire into the approaching mob--gunshots heard by on-duty personnel in Santiago de la Gloria. While Morgan was marching from Buenaventura to Portobelo, the Spanish boat which had so narrowly escaped the attacker's grasp arrived at the wharf and began raising the town. This, together with the sound of gunfire from the outpost, should have been sufficient to bring the town to arms; nevertheless, when the buccaneers overran the city about a half hour later, most of the citizens (and militia members) were still sleeping. The castellano of Santiago de la Gloria, Juan de Somovilla Tejada, was also too concerned about slumber--he refused to be roused,⁴⁸ instructing his subordinates to handle the situation. Sargeant Nicolás Trejo and artillery captain Manuel de Olivera, however, did begin to make preparations for the coming attack. Cannon were ordered onto Santiago de la Gloria's westernmost parapet and loaded with grapeshot, and the main gate of the fortress, on the side of the plaza facing the town, was left open so that stragglers among the garrison could arrive and report to their stations up until the last minute. Meanwhile some town officials, including Cristóbal García Niño and Andrés Fernández Dávila, tried to wake the city and organize some defenses. Morgan by this

time had arrived before Santiago de la Gloria. He saw that he had failed to achieve a surprise and that the now fully armed castle stood between his men and the town. Nevertheless, the buccaneers charged against the west wall--the Spaniards inside fired their first round of artillery. Had the cannon of Santiago been loaded properly, the English invasion might have ended at this point: instead and despite seemingly careful preparations, only two pieces had been loaded, both of which had been rammed down incorrectly. One gun had been loaded backwards, the powder placed in the barrel after the grape shot, while the other had been prepared with round shot instead of grape shot. To make matters worse, when this second gun was fired, the elevation was off and the ball sailed well over the heads of the attackers, splashing in the water at mid-bay.

One group of Morgan's force closed on the walls of Santiago de la Gloria, while a second smaller group--about seventy men--climbed the cerro de chorilla and opened sniper fire from the heights above the fort. The advocates of San Cristóbal had been right: soon artillerymen in Santiago de la Gloria were falling from a steady rain of musket fire. The larger division of buccaneers continued along the walls of the castle, keeping close to the base of the bastions so that cannon fire could not be directed at them from the defenders above. Soon they rounded the stronghold and moved into the city itself. Morgan and his gang met with little opposition

in the town, and within a few minutes the city was under their control. The buccaneers liberated several Englishmen who were found chained to the walls of the aduana.

Meanwhile some resistance was encountered at San Gerónimo--the few Spaniards there began a musket fire at the pirates on shore. At this point Morgan did not know what to do as he had no idea that the water between his men and the obstinant fort was only knee-deep. The English prisoners liberated from the aduana, however, knew the depth of the water all too well as they had sludged through it daily as slaves in the construction of the reducto. They informed their liberators of the fort's vulnerability, and the pirates charged against the place. The defenders of San Gerónimo quickly lost heart and surrendered to the corsarios who, now with wet feet, were more angry than ever.

Morgan's men were quick to take to the streets in search of what they had come for--gold, silver, and the riches of empire. Morgan, however, gathered his group and reestablished order so that a successful attack could be launched against Santiago de la Gloria. Morgan knew that both the south shore fortress and San Felipe on the opposite shore had to be taken so that the English ships could sail into the harbor. Although the city had fallen, the fortresses still opposed Morgan's control of the port.

After herding the people of Portobelo into the main church on the secondary plaza of the city, the pirates moved into the stone houses which stood at the opposite end of Triana field from Santiago de la Gloria. From these semi-protected areas they began a barrage against the fort which added to the fire from the hill tops. At one point the English attempted a direct attack on the gate of the fort, but they were driven back before the fires placed at the base of the wooden doorway could take effect. Then, in a graphic display of buccaneer character, Morgan went back to the church and gathered Portobelo's terrified priests, nuns, women, and children and marched them into the thick of the battle. The buccaneer intended to use the captives as a shield. His whole column began a slow advance towards the castle, hiding behind the trembling nuns and crying children. The soldiers, however, fearing the consequences of being captured alive more than falling in battle, opened fire into the mob, killing católicos and luteranos alike. During all this activity, however, another band of Englishmen had moved to the other side of the fort, and while all attention was directed at the horrible spectacle before the main gate, this second mob introduced themselves into the confines of the palisade with ladders found in the city. Soon there were dozens of buccaneers in the fort, and the defenders were defeated—over half of the eighty or so soldiers who had managed to get into Santiago de la Gloria when the initial

alarm was sounded died before the battle was over; another report put the number of dead among the garrison of Santiago as high as 74.⁴⁹ The sleepy castellano who had resisted being roused from his bunk was found dead after the battle, shot by fire from the hill. Eleven more English prisoners were found in the castle dungeon.

The question of English prisoners at Portobelo was critical to Morgan's justification for attacking the Spanish city. Thomas Modyford, the governor of Jamaica who had issued Morgan's letter of marque, had been persuaded to certify the buccaneers as crown-sponsored privateers by two arguments. First and foremost, it was widely held by the English on Jamaica that Spain intended to retake the island, just as they had retaken Providence Island in 1666. Portobelo and Cartagena were thought to be the centers from which such an attack would come. A first strike, therefore, would be a significant and positive act for the defense of England's most important West Indian colony.⁵⁰ The second reason why Modyford signed Morgan's commission was that several reports indicated that English seamen captured when Spain reclaimed Providence Island were being used as slaves and otherwise mistreated in Portobelo. Three Englishmen, Robert Rawlingson, Isaac Webber and Richard Cree, swore as follows in a deposition dated 5 October 1668:

But when they had laid down their arms (the English who surrendered at Providence Island) the Spaniards refused them the barque, and carried them

slaves to Portobelo where they were chained to the ground in a dungeon 12 feet by 10, in which were 33 prisoners; they were forced to work in the water (on San Gerónimo) from five in the morning till seven at night, and at such a rate that the Spaniards confessed they made one of them do more work than any three negroes, yet when weak with want of victuals and sleep they were knocked down and beaten with cudgels, and four or five died. Having no clothes, their backs were blistered with the sun, their heads scorched, their necks, shoulders, and hands raw with carrying stones and mortar, their feet chopped, and their legs bruised and battered with the irons. . . .⁵¹

At any rate and whatever the excuse, the English were now in nominal possession of one of Spain's vital New World imperial centers. During the mid-morning hours after the fall of Santiago de la Gloria, the buccaneers busied themselves with securing their possession of the city and the south shore. The final obstacle to complete control of the port was Castillo San Felipe, which, under the command of Alexandro Manuel Pau y Rocaberti, still flew the lions and castles. Shortly after the fall of Santiago de la Gloria, the English began an artillery barrage of the north shore fort with guns captured that morning. San Felipe returned fire and thus began a noisy, if ineffective, artillery duel which lasted throughout the remainder of the day. Anxious to bring their ships into the harbor, at the first sign of daylight on 12 July--the day after the fall of the city--the buccaneers sent an envoy towards San Felipe with a white flag to negotiate the surrender of the defiant castle. San Felipe

fired on the boat, prompting Morgan to undertake the forced reduction of this last Spanish stronghold.

About an hour before noon, Juan Saborino, the gun officer of San Felipe, reported to the castellano that a large number of the enemy were aboard canoes making their way to the north shore: the battle for the "Iron Castle" was about to begin. Pau y Rocaberti ordered the wooden doors of the castle reinforced with dirt and stone to strengthen them against the expected onslaught. The men of San Felipe, however, knew they could not hold out forever no matter what sort of defense they mustered--the fort had no food reserves. As incredible as it may seem, each day food had been transported from the city to feed the men stationed in San Felipe. And so, on that fateful day, the garrison had a total of four pounds of bread and a small store of wine--with⁵² this they were expected to withstand a siege!

The buccaneers forced two captured Spanish soldiers to guide them to San Felipe in such a way as not to come under fire of the castle's guns. One of the guides, Juan de Mallvegli, was a true servant of the crown--he attempted to lead the pirates on a path that would bring them directly into the range of fire of the fort's artillery. The other guide, however, chose not to give his life to stop the buccaneers--he told the English of de Mallvegli's plot. Accordingly, the English changed their approach and avoided the ambush. In the early afternoon, after taking a new,

longer way around the fort, the attackers charged one of the rear walls of the keep, but they were easily driven off by San Felipe's brass cannon. Again and again the buccaneers attempted to breach the walls, but after the battle had gone on for over an hour the pirates had not made any significant gains. At this point it seemed that there was no chance of San Felipe falling to the enemy--but then, just as everything was going so well, the castellano decided to surrender the fort. Despite the protestations of the other officers of the castle, the gates were opened and the English poured in. By three o'clock of the day after the attack on Portobelo began, all the castles--castles which had cost so much to the crown--were in enemy hands.

The most cruel irony of the events of 1668 was that some citizens of Portobelo who had escaped from the pirate attack on 11 July had gathered a boatload of supplies, including food, for the garrison of San Felipe--they had intended to land at the fort the very night after Pau y Rocaberti capitulated.

As in 1601, the forts had failed in their primary purpose. Now in full possession of Portobelo, Morgan and his men set about extracting the wealth of the city. No substantial amount of specie was found in the aduana because it was regular Spanish policy to keep such wealth as there was on the Isthmus in Panama City, far from the dangerous

Caribbean coast. Most of the wealthy colonists who had property in Portobelo were also on the Pacific coast. Nevertheless the pirates rounded up the vecinos that were captured and began the long and cruel process of forcing them to disclose the locations of their stashes of treasure. In the hurry of the pre-dawn attack, most of the citizens had thrown their valuables into wells, pots, or any hiding place available. Even though the city was restricted to a rather small area, the buccaneers would have been unable to find the whereabouts of these stashes without the cooperation of the Spaniards themselves, cooperation, of course, which was not freely given. The looters began a series of tortures and brutalities which over the course of some 30 days would net them over 100,000 pieces of eight in stashed treasure. Even this amount did not satisfy the pirates. Long after all the wealth of Portobelo had been extracted from the people, the buccaneers continued torturing prisoners in the hope of bringing to light still more loot. An English clergyman, John Style, wrote in 1670 of the outrages of the pirates in their quest for wealth:

It is a common thing amongst the privateers, besides burning with matches and such like slight torments, to cut a man to pieces, first some flesh, then a hand, an arm, a leg, sometimes tying a cord about his head, and with a stick twisting it till the eyes start out, which is called 'woodling.' Before taking Puerto Bello, thus some were used, because they refused to discover a way into the town which was not, and many in the town, because they would not discover wealth they knew not of: a woman there

was by some set bare upon a baking stone and roasted, because she did not confess of money which she had only in their conceit; this he heard some declare boasting, and one that was sick confess with sorrow: besides the horrid oaths, blasphemies, abuse of Scriptures, rapes, whoredoms, and adultries, and such not forborne in the common highways and not punished but made a jest of even by authority.⁵³

As horrible as these accusations are, they seem not to be products of the imagination--Esquemeling and others repeat these charges in essentially the same form. To be sure, long after the English had left Portobelo, apologists appeared who wrote not of the brutality of the buccaneers, but rather of their civil behavior:

And for the better vindicating themselves against the usual scandals of that enemy (Spain), aver that having several ladies of great quality and other prisoners they were proffered their liberty to go to the President's (of Panama) camp, but they refused, saying that they were now prisoners to a person of quality, who was more tender of their honours than they doubted to find in the President's camp among his rude soldiers. . . .⁵⁴

Another English writer went so far as to claim that the only reason the pirates attacked Portobelo and the forts was that the Spanish authorities in that city refused to give the pirates supplies: "they landed at 3 o'clock in the morning and made their way into the town and seeing that they could not refresh themselves in quiet, they were enforced to assault the castle which was taken by storm."⁵⁵

The English suffered only eighteen men killed in the attack, and just 32 additional soldiers were wounded.⁵⁶

Towards the end of their stay, however, the death toll began to grow as the sickly nature of Portobelo⁵⁷ began to have its invariable effect upon the newcomers. Shortly after the capture of the city all pretenses of proper sanitation were dispensed with--indeed the bodies of the dead at Santiago de la Gloria were piled in a huge heap where they remained for thirty days in the tropical heat. One can imagine both the stench and the additional health hazards presented by such action. One Spaniard, however, was very thankful that the pirates had been so negligent: presumed dead, he had been placed in the gruesome pile. Five days later he managed to squirm forth from the rotting corpses and rejoin his compatriots.⁵⁸

Don Agustín de Bracamonte, the temporary President of Panama (the actual President, Don Juan Pérez de Guzmán was in prison in Lima by order of the Viceroy of Peru), heard of the fall of the Atlantic port on the same day that the attack took place. He immediately called Panama City to arms and set off for the north coast to reclaim the vital city. Bracamonte's operating strategy was to reinforce castillo San Felipe with fresh troops and provisions so as to prevent the English from sailing their fleet into the harbor. The President left Panama City on Thursday and hoped to be in Portobelo on Saturday. As was usually the case, however, the Spanish force became bogged down with bureaucratic and

logistical problems. The 300 regulars and 500 militia men which made up Bracamonte's force camped the first few nights at Venta de Cruces, waiting for such necessities as food, shoes, and guns to come by mule from the capital. Things were going so slowly that Bracamonte did not leave Venta de Cruces until Sunday; a day later news arrived that San Felipe had also fallen to the English. Now Bracamonte faced real problems: with an enemy force entrenched in the Portobelo castles, he stood little chance of retaking the port. A junta de guerra was held to select a course of
 59 action. It was agreed that the army of Panama should continue on to Portobelo, if not to retake the place then to at least determine the situation first hand. Accordingly the Spaniards went forward, eventually settling themselves in a small valley near the Río Cascajal some seven miles from the captured city. From here Bracamonte sent a letter to the Governor of Cartagena requesting military assistance. When the Governor in Cartagena received the news of Morgan's entrada, he organized a fleet of seven ships to sail to the Isthmus--the only problem was that owing to the great distances within the New World empire, this relief force did not arrive until long after Morgan had left for Jamaica.

Once the English realized that the Panamanians had arrived on the north coast, Morgan began negotiations for the ransom of the city. Along with everyone else, Morgan knew all too well that Spain could not afford any diversion of the

flow of New World silver to the royal treasury. If Portobelo were to remain in English hands, or if the fortresses were knocked out of action so that the city could be retaken from Spain at any time, the functioning of the carrera de Indias--that most vital part of the Hispanic World Empire--would be seriously jeopardized. With this in mind, Morgan set the ransom for the city at 350,000 pieces of eight on 14 July.⁶⁰ Morgan first threatened to burn the city, destroy the castles, and take the cannon and ammunition if Bracamonte did not agree to terms. Later he threatened to keep the city as an English outpost on the Spanish Main. The President at first would not treat with Morgan's offers--instead he launched several ineffective attacks against the pirate stronghold which resulted in nothing more than a few deaths on both sides. At one point Morgan gathered 200 of his men and set out to rout the Spanish force. The result of this attack, however, was also inconsequential--the situation was a stalemate.

Other factors were in operation which would determine the final outcome of the English invasion. The Spanish were concerned with several important developments: heat, dampness, bad food, sickness, and general morale problems all contributed to a growing feeling in the army of Panama that a retreat to the capital was in order. Juan de Salina, the maestro de campo of the advance guard, argued for retreat at

the junta de guerra called by the President to decide on what to do:

We find ourselves today with just eight-hundred men, inexperienced and poorly armed people who, man for man, are not the equal of their enemies. These men are the only defense of this Kingdom and so of all Peru. . . . I consider it impossible for us to recover Portobelo and its castles. . . . What we must do is leave sufficient men here to hold the enemy back if he advances and retreat with the rest to Panama.⁶¹

In addition to this argument for strategic withdrawal was a further consideration: rumor had it that the French who had split from Morgan's force before the attack were now converging on San Lorenzo in the first step of a general action designed to take Panama City. To Bracamonte this threat was very real and in and of itself was sufficient grounds to justify retreat. Now decided on withdrawal, Bracamonte was more disposed to negotiate with Morgan for a reasonable ransom. Morgan's demand of 350,000 pesos, while reflecting the strategic value of Portobelo to the Spanish crown, was unreasonable insofar as the Panamanians were concerned. After all, Panama was not a Mexico City or Lima. A far more realistic figure, they argued, was 100,000 pesos—a sum which would effectively double the amount of treasure the pirates already had from looting the city. For reasons of his own, Morgan too was predisposed to make a quick deal with the Spanish. Illness was taking a high toll each day in the pirate ranks. The buccaneer force in San Felipe, in fact,

62

was reduced to less than 40 men. In light of these factors, Cristóbal García Niño, the commander of the armed forces that remained outside Portobelo after the President's retreat, came to agreement with Morgan on this sum. Hostages were exchanged and a date for transfer was set. The ransom funds had to be raised in Panama City from wealthy merchants--those who stood the most to lose if Portobelo were destroyed. On the condition that the residents of Portobelo would repay Panama City the full ransom from the profits from the next fair, the merchants gave the needed funds: collected together were 27 bars of silver (valued at 43,000 pesos), several chests of plate (valued at 13,000 pesos), 4000 pesos in gold coin and 40,000 pesos in silver coin.⁶³

The residents of Portobelo later claimed that they had been forced to sign the capitulation of the city (and a request for ransom payment) by the pirates under the pain of death--accordingly, when the time came to repay the merchants of Panama the 100,000 pesos, they argued that they were not accountable for the sum. This squabble generated so much documentation that an entire legajo in the Archivo General de Indias (Panamá 81) is devoted to it.

The total treasure the pirates took out of Portobelo was about 200,000 pesos. The division of the wealth followed the rather complicated rules which the brethren of the coast had devised for themselves--let it suffice to say that the minimum division of the Portobelo loot represented 600 ounces

of silver for the lowest paid men, or about eighty English
⁶⁴
 pounds.

A final ironic event closes the role Henry Morgan played in the history of Portobelo. A year or so after the entrada, one of the ships which had been part of Morgan's fleet, the Oxford of 240 tons, caught fire near Jamaica and exploded with the loss of over 200 of the pirates who had been at Portobelo. The Spanish ambassador to the Court of St. James, Antonio Francisco Mesía, the Conde de Molina, informed the English government that the destruction of the Oxford was an act of God in judgment of those who had participated in the
⁶⁵
 "unlawful surprise at Porto Vello."

Notes

1 "Planta del Castillo de Santiago que se propone en el Cerro de Chorrillo junto a la ciudad de Portobelo," drawn by Fernando de Montolla, n.d., AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 19.

2 ANP, Susto Documents, vol. x, document 193, "Tracta de fabricas y guerra de Tierra Firme," 1600.

3 Letter from Don Alonso de Sotomayor to the Crown, ANP, Susto Documents, vol. xi, document 205.

4 Ibid. The continued poverty of the Portobelo treasury is revealed throughout documents from this period. See, in

general, AGI Panamá 15 and 45; AGI Contaduría 1506, especially folios 1-310, and other account lists in the same legajo.

5

ANP, cédula of 3 July 1603.

6

Letter from Don Alonso de Sotomayor to the crown, ANP, Susto Documents, vol. xi, document 205.

7

"Planta primera del Castillo de Santiago de Portovelo," returned to Spain by don Enrique Enríquez with his letter of 15 July 1637, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 56. Additional funding for construction and general defense considerations came in the form of a 35,000 peso appropriation from the treasury in 1607. This came just in time, for according to officials in Portobelo, soldiers were going without pay (various letters to the crown, AGI Panamá 15).

8

Ibid. Alfredo Castellero Calvo, "Portobelo...", p. 147.

9

"Plano del Castillo de San Felipe de Portobelo," by Cristóbal de Roda, sent to Spain with an expediente regarding fortifications in 1620, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 34. Also see documents relating to the Junta de Guerra of 13 March 1620, AGI Panamá 87.

10

"Descripción de Puertovelo y planta de la ciudad y sus castillos, hecho en 15 de julio de 1626," sent by Cristóbal de Roda to the crown with an expediente on fortifications, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 42.

11

ANP, Susto Documents, vol. xii, document 227, 1607.

12

Vázquez de Espinosa, Compendium and Description of the Indies, p. 304. Other military population data is available in ANP Susto Documents, vol. xii, document 227.

13

Descripción de Panamá y su provincia sacada de la relación que por mando del consejo hizo y embio aquella audiencia, año

1607, in Colección de libros y documentos referentes a la historia de América p. 194. Also see Omar Jáen Suárez, La población del istmo de Panamá del siglo XVI al siglo XX (Panama, 1978).

14

The small suburb was named after the merchant district of Sevilla. See Ruth Pike, "Seville in the Sixteenth Century," HAHR 41 (1961) pp. 1-30. Thomas Gage reports that in the 1637 fleet alone over 500 soldiers died, indicating that there were a large number of troops carried on the flotas. (Thomas Gage's Travels in the New World, p. 331.) Robert S. Chamberlain reports that the fleet of 1551 had over 3,000 troops on board, "The Spanish Treasure Fleet of 1551," in The American Neptune, 6:4 (1946) pp. 241-252.

15

Letter from the Cabildo of Portobelo to the Crown, 1617, AGI Panamá 32.

16

Letter from the Cabildo of Portobelo to the Crown, 29 June 1609, AGI Panamá 30.

17

ANP, cédula of 14 March 1611; Letter from the Cabildo of Portobelo to the Crown of 1617, AGI Panamá 32. As reported in chapter 1, note 120, much documentation relating to the construction of the aduana is contained in AGI Panamá 34a.

18

ANP, cédula of 23 November 1631; cédula of 20 May 1631. See Gage's Travels. María del Carmen Meno García, in her article "El traslado" reports the death rate in Portobelo to be about seven to eight percent, p. 82.

19

Letter from the Cabildo of Portobelo to the Crown of 17 February 1623, AGI Panamá 32.

20

Many of these letters are contained in AGI Panamá 32. My thanks go to Murdo MacLeod for working this legajo for me.

21

Letter of Captain Cristóbal Guerra y Solís to the crown, 1617; Cabildo of Portobelo to the crown, 20 July 1620, AGI Panamá 32.

22

ANP, cédula of 23 November 1628. Also see Peter T. Bradley, "Maritime Defense of the Viceroyalty of Peru (1600-1700)."

23

ANP, cédulas of 3 March and 10 December, 1611; also see Carla R. Phillips, Six Galleons for the King of Spain, p. 91.

24

ANP, cédula of 25 March 1608.

25

ANP, cédula of 24 May 1609.

26

ANP, cédula of 19 April 1626.

27

ANP, cédula of 27 September 1608. In 1608, for instance, the crown chastised the royal officials of Portobelo for having no accounting system and few record of the hundreds of thousands of pesos spent there over the years. Also see "Guerra. Fortificaciones de Tierra Firme," AGI Panamá 87, and Zapatero, San Lorenzo, pp. 61-76, though much of Zapatero's material relates to San Lorenzo and will be treated in chapter 5.

28

"Planta del castillo de Santiago en la ciudad de Puertobelo," drawn by Cristóbal de Roda, 1620, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 35. Also see "Acta de Junta de Guerra" 13 March 1620 on consolidation and construction of fortifications of Portobelo, AGI Panamá 87.

29

At this same time the defenses of Cartagena underwent major constructions and reconstructions, the most important of which was the building of that city's walls. Perhaps the crown was unwilling to expend significant funds on the isthmus at the same time it was pouring pesos into other port cities. See Enrique Marco Dorta, Cartagena de Indias, ciudad y sus monumentos (Sevilla, 1951) and Juan Manuel Zapatero, Las fortificaciones de Cartagena de Indias: estudios asesor para su restauración (Madrid, 1969), and his Historia de las fortificaciones de Cartagena de Indias (Madrid, 1979). A short summary of Cartagena's defenses is available in Rudolfo Segovia Salas, The Fortifications of Cartagena de Indias: Strategy and History (Bogotá, 1982).

30

"Plano del Castillo de San Diego de Portobelo," by Cristóbal de Roda, 1626, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 44. Also see "Sobre reparos en las fortificaciones de Portobelo, Río de Chagre, y Panamá," 27 January 1628, AGI Panamá 87.

31

"Planta segunda del castillo de Santiago de Portovelo, de lo que antiguamente estava hecho, de lo que agora se ba haciendo y de lo que debria hacerse si hubiera orden para ello," drawn and sent to Spain with a letter of 15 July 1637 by Enrique Enrriquez, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 57. "Planta tercera del Castillo de Puerto Uelo, para que se vea como quedara lo uajo de dicho castillo despues de acabado lo que se va haciendo y lo que convendria hacer se viniendo orden," drawn and sent to Spain with a letter of 15 July 1637 by Enrique Enrriquez, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 58.

32

"Perfiles de la muralla que se va haciendo en el castillo de Santiago de Portobelo," drawn and sent to Spain with a letter of 15 July 1637 by Enrique Enrriquez, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 59.

33

Luis Rafael Arana and Albert Manucy, The Building of Castillo de San Marcos (Washington D.C., 1977) p. 44. Juan Manuel Zapatero, la fortificación abaluartada en América (San Juan, 1978).

34

"Planta del castillo de Santiago de Puertobelo," by Antonio de Fonseca Arriachea, Maestro of the king's constructions, 1639, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 60.

35

ANP, cédula of 21 August 1646.

36

Alfredo Castellero Calvo, "Portobelo. . ." p. 158.

37

Ibid.

38

"Planta del Fuerte de San Gerónimo (de Portovelo) hecha por D. Fernando de la Riva Agüero, Presidente y Capitan General deste Reino," AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 80, and "Planta del fuerte de San Gerónimo de la ciudad de Portovelo fabricado por el Maestro de Campo Don Fernando de la Riba Agüero . . ." 1666, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 81.

39

Alexander Olivier Esquemeling, The Pirates of Panama (New York, 1914).

40

Peter Earle, The Sack of Panama (New York, 1981).

41

Robert Louis Stevenson, Treasure Island (New York, 1912); Howard Pyle, Howard Pyle's Book of Pirates (New York, 1913); Clarence Henry Haring, The Buccaneers in the West Indies in the XVII Century (London, 1910). Some useful information on buccaneering in general is found in Hussey's "Spanish Reaction to Foreign Aggression." A novel approach to the issue of buccaneering is taken by B. R. Burg in his Sodomy and the Pirate Tradition: English Sea Rovers in the Seventeenth-Century Caribbean (New York, 1984). On the other hand, the classic account of buccaneer activity in the Caribbean as a whole--placed in the context of European activity during the entire colonial period (unlike Haring, who limits his discussion to the seventeenth century)--is A.P. Newton, The European Nations in the West Indies, especially chapters 15 ("The Buccaneers and International Policy, 1660-1665") and 17 ("The Heyday of the Buccaneers, 1665-1671").

42

Uncited material in my discussion of Morgan at Portobelo has been taken from Earle. For Morgan's version of the event, see Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies (hereinafter COSPAWI) (Vaduz, Lichtenstein, 1964), vol. v, document 1838; Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice (Vaduz, 1970), document 48. For background material on Morgan, see E. A. Cruikshank, The Life of Sir Henry Morgan (Toronto, 1935); Donald Rowland, "Spanish Occupation of the Island of Old Providence or Santa Catalina, 1641-70," HAHR 15 (1935).

43

Lyle McAlister, Spain and Portugal in the New World, 1492-1700, p. 433.

44

"Residencia a Don Agustine de Bracomonte," AGI Escribania de Cámara (EC) 462a.

45

COSPAWI, vol. v., p. 611.

46

COSPAWI vol. v, document 1838, p. 610.

47

Shortly before Morgan's attack on Portobelo he led an attack against Cuba in which several canoes were taken as well as a significant supply of beef. While in Cuba Morgan "gathered" knowledge regarding the rumored impending attack on Jamaica--which, of course, was all a great fabrication designed to lend support to Morgan's petition for letters of marque against the Spanish Main. See Felipe Pichardo Moya, "La edad media cubana," Revista Cubana 17 (1943), pp. 288-325.

48

This account is summarized in Earle, pp. 54-79. Also see various "cartas y expedientes del presidente y oidores, 1668-1671," AGI Panamá 24, which is stronger on the 1671 invasion than the 1668 affair. A useful accounting is found in AGI EC 577a, "Informaciones hechas en la forma que el enemibo coxio la ciudad de San Felipe de Puerto Bello, 1668."

49

COSPAWI vol. v, document 1838, p. 611.

50

Ibid.

51

Ibid., document 1815, p. 617.

52

Earle, p. 75.

53

John Style to the Secretary of State at Whitehall, 4 January 1670, COSPAWI vol. vii, document 138, p. 50.

54

COSPAWI vol. v, document 1838, p. 612.

55

Ibid., p. 611.

56

Ibid., p. 612.

57

COSPAWI vol. vii, document 11, p. 2.

58

Earle, p. 74.

59

See Earle, chapter 6; also papers relating to the Junta de Guerra, 23 July 1668, AGI EC 462a and papers relating to the ransom of Portobelo, AGI Panamá 81.

60

Ibid. Morgan's letters were deliberately obnoxious, something which further antagonized the president. These letters are preserved in AGI Panamá 81.

61

Papers relating to the Junta de Guerra, 23 July 1668, AGI EC 462a.

62

Earle, p. 87.

63

Papers relating to the ransom of Portobelo, and deposition of García Niño, 1668, AGI Panamá 81.

64

COSPAWI vol. vii, document 1, p. 1.

65

Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts relating to English Affairs existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice, document 48, p. 38.

FORTIFICATIONS OF THE RIO CHAGRES AND PANAMA CITY, 1570-1671

Some twelve leagues down the coast to the west from Portobelo lies the mouth of the Río Chagres, the entrance to the water route to Panama City and the South Sea. Ever since the Chagres had first been exploited as a transisthmian route the strategic significance of the river was clear to both Spain and its enemies. In addition to its importance for carrera traffic, the Chagres directly impacted upon the defenses of Panama City. It was clear that for the defenses of Panama's south coast the geography of the isthmus was the greatest bulwark of all, but the Chagres, winding its way to within a few miles of the audiencia chambers, represented a crack in these natural defenses.¹ Even so, for many long years foreign interlopers were free to thwart river traffic; it was not until the 1590s that Spanish engineers began the construction of fortifications on the imposing cliffs at the river's mouth. Once work began, however, castillo San Lorenzo, as the construction came to be called, grew into one

of the great fortresses of the New World. And like the castles of Cartagena, San Juan, and Habana--to which it can fairly be compared--before its ultimate demise in the nineteenth century, San Lorenzo would be the site of some of the great battles of Caribbean history.

Years of Neglect, 1536-1587

As described in Chapter 1, the river route across the isthmus was opened in the early 1530s, and by the middle of that decade a regular flow of shipping connected the Caribbean to the South Sea. Not soon after, in 1536, the first corsairs arrived to prey on the river craft, taking at least one boat within a few months of their arrival. Although this was not an isolated incident, the level of foreign activity in the area did not grow to dangerous proportions until the late 1560s. In 1569 French pirates took some 20,000 pesos worth of goods in raids on river craft, and for a time they sat at anchor off the river's mouth, halting all regular traffic between the Chagres and Nombre de Dios. The year 1571 marks a turning point in the history of the Chagres. In that year the reputed wealth carried on the river barges finally attracted numerous French and English corsairs to Panamanian waters.

During the early 1570s, French pirates dominated the waters in and around the mouth of the Chagres, but as early as the second year of the decade Drake himself explored the

lower portions of the river.⁵ In 1572 the Dutch--their revolt against Philip II barely begun--arrived off the river in search of Peruvian bullion.⁶ By the end of the 1570s, the defense situation along the river had become so bad that in some years the number of corsair vessels operating in the area outnumbered Spanish ships.⁷ This situation, unabating in the 1580s, was similar to that faced by Nombre de Dios during this period and led to Spanish action in the last years of the sixteenth century.

Initial Activity: The Era of Antonelli

The mouth of the Río Chagres opens into a small harbor on the Caribbean coast. On the northwestern side of the river, the land is generally low, though small hills abound in the distance. On the other side of the river, however, the terrain is quite different. Immediately as the river ends, a small peninsula juts out some several hundred feet into the ocean. What makes this small sliver of land so imposing is that it stands some 75 feet above sealevel, and is bounded on three sides by sheer cliffs. At the base of these cliffs, on the river side, is a very narrow band of rocks. It was on these rocks that the first fortifications were built.⁸

The same instructions that brought Antonelli to Nombre de Dios and Portobelo, ordered him to reconnoiter the Chagres to determine the best location for the construction of a fort. Though he directed the construction of some wood and

earthen trenches in 1587, he envisioned the eventual construction of a major castle on the cliff face. In a cédula of 23 November 1588, the intention to build a fortress here is clearly reported, and in response to these various directives, Antonelli urged the construction that would be:

apoyandose de un lado sobre una peña de 25 p. s. de alto, y de opuesto una barranea no muy alta, no siendo el ancho del río en esta parte de 220 p.s. con buena piedra para la construcción y para cal al pie de la obra, y que será mas economico, puesto no es camino de carros, haziendo lqs pilares de piedra y cubiertas de madera.⁹

Other than the earthwork trincheras no immediate action¹⁰ was taken on the engineer's proposals. In the meantime, Antonelli had taken leave of the isthmus to oversee the construction of the defenses of Havana. In 1594, however, he returned to direct constructions in Portobelo and at the mouth of the Chagres.

In 1595 construction began on a small "plataforma y torre" on the narrow band of rocks at the base of the cliffs. Only one plan of this construction exists (and that from a much later map), but some information is available¹¹ (figure 5-1). The platform is identified by "1"; the tower by "3." A few workmens' huts can be seen situated on the coastal rocks south of the castle. Note that the tower is built against the face of the cliff, not on the top of the peninsula. It was constructed of stone and was built to hold 8 pieces of artillery, costing something in the range of

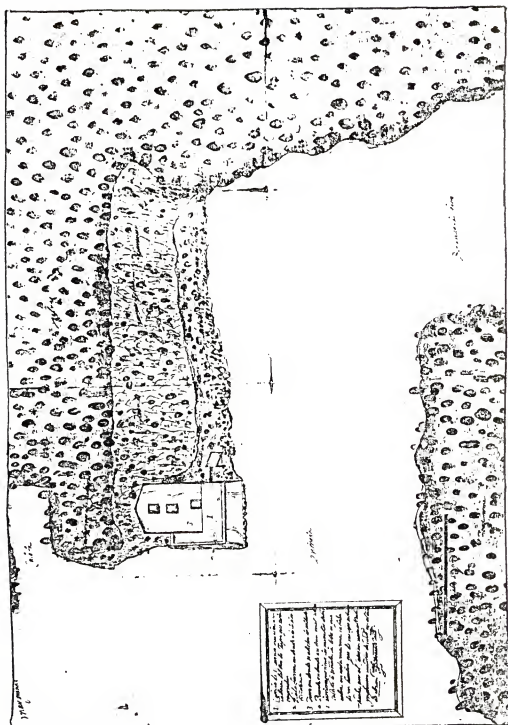


Figure 5-1 San Lorenzo circa 1620 (Source:AGI/MP Panama 36)

130,000 ducats (108,333 pesos). The platform-tower design was typical of Antonelli's other work in Portobelo and Cartagena. This small fortaleza, like the original Santiago at Portobelo, was not viewed as a temporary structure---indeed it was still in use as a secondary defense work ("el poderosi") in 1671. Though this construction commanded the entrance to the river, one is left to speculate the outcome of a battle wherein enemy forces occupied the heights above the castle.

At the beginning of 1596 much work remained to be done on the fort, indeed before defense preparations were speeded up because of the threat of invasion posed by Drake, only three men were regularly engaged in construction activity. But when news got out that Drake and 23 English ships were fast approaching the isthmus, Antonelli and governor Don Alonso de Sotomayor quickly moved to secure what they both recognized as Panama's front door. Sotomayor stationed 700 men in and around the unfinished fort, men whom Antonelli put to work on defense preparations. While these constructions were underway, the English fleet attacked Nombre de Dios and Portobelo (see chapter 3).¹² At Nombre de Dios the English landed a small force for a march against Panama, but these were defeated near Venta de Cruces by a Spanish army under Juan Enríquez Conabut. Another attempt to strike at Panama via the Chagres was considered, but the strong garrison at the

river's mouth dissuaded renewed efforts. Shortly afterwards¹³
 Drake died and Thomas Baskerville ordered the fleet home.

After the English left the isthmus Antonelli made plans to supplement the Chagres fortifications by building a small fort about three leagues up river, at the confluence of the Chagres and the Río Gatun. To be manned by five or six soliders (who would be relieved from the larger fort at the boca every 8 days), this fort was never envisioned as a major defensework, and whatever action that was taken towards its construction remains unknown. As will be discussed later, a stone fortress was eventually constructed here as a second¹⁴ line in the river defense system.

Meanwhile, during 1597-1599 the fortress at the river mouth was expanded and, in February 1599, finished. It was at this point that the platform and tower were given the name¹⁵
 San Lorenzo el Real.

Adjustments and Reconstructions, 1600-1671

After the construction of Antonelli's San Lorenzo, little activity was undertaken at the site for several years. Even so, yearly upkeep was expensive owing to the frequent torrential downpours that characterize Panama's north coast. In 1603, for example, the treasury of Panama appropriated¹⁶ 20,000 pesos for repairs to both the platform and tower. Cristóbal de Roda inspected San Lorenzo in 1608, reporting that construction deficiencies similar to those that plagued

the castles of Portobelo were also apparent in the Chagres fortification. Additionally De Roda noted the tactical flaw posed by the cliff heights. His own work at Portobelo, however, took him away from San Lorenzo, so no action was taken to correct the fortress' failings.¹⁷ Another investigation was undertaken in 1617 by Capitán Don Juan de Noua, and if anything, the fort was in worse shape then than it had been nine years earlier.

In 1620 de Roda again inspected San Lorenzo with the result that he found the castle to be in very bad shape--indeed parts of it were nearing a state of collapse. As indicated on figure 5-1 (presented earlier), de Roda indicated that the walls of the platform near the ocean and river were badly deteriorated. These "cracks" are indicated on his map. Further, and in addition to San Lorenzo's not being able to defend itself from the cliff heights, he noted that corsairs could anchor with total impunity in the small¹⁸ "portete de Batatas" on the north side of the peninsula.

Regarding the dismal condition of the fortress, he wrote, "la parte de la mar estaba cabada pro debayo de ella y todos sus cimientos con unos socavones mui grandes que entra la mer por ellos, que casi parece imposible el aberse podido¹⁹ sustentar." A junta de guerra was held in Panama City in March 1620, immediately after the results of de Roda's inspections were made known. The junta considered several recommendations by the engineer, not the least of which was a

proposal to build a new tower that would be 20 feet higher than Antonelli's. This, he wrote, would greatly increase the range of the artillery and would go a long way toward rendering the portete safe.²⁰ Even so, the fort could still not be defended from the heights.

Further thought led de Roda to submit still another plan, one which called for the demolition of much of Antonelli's San Lorenzo, the construction of a new, larger fortress at the same location, and the digging of a small trench work across the peninsula to provide some defenses above the castle. The proposed fort--nearly a mirror of Santiago de la Gloria in Portobelo, though smaller--is depicted in figures 5-2 and 5-3.²¹ The two principal bastions (labeled "1" on both plans) faced the river, while a 50 foot high tower ("8" on figure 5-2, "6" on figure 5-3) stood in the rear of the fort against the cliff face. The platforms served to hold six artillery pieces, and the tower had the dual function of housing both troops and gunpowder. As before, however, and unlike de Roda's original proposal, there was no trenchwork in the cliff heights. The cost of the fort was some 80,000 pesos, and when the proposal was made, it was estimated that construction would take about a year and a half.²²

Still, 80,000 pesos was a great deal of money, and Antonelli's San Lorenzo, if nearly in a state of collapse,

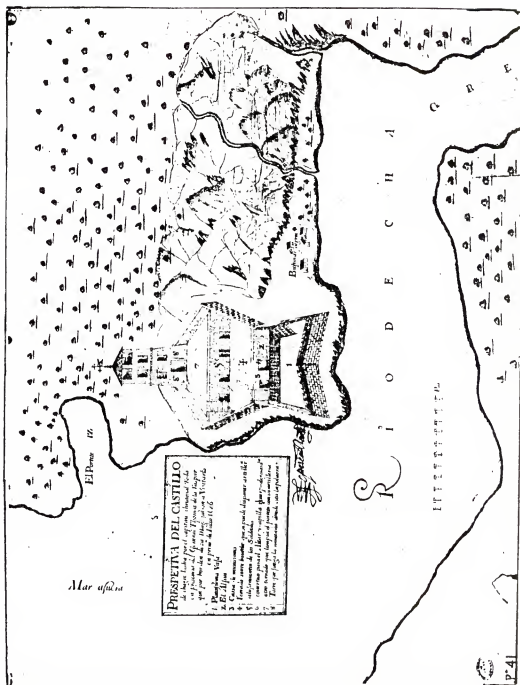


Figure 5-2 San Lorenzo (Source: AGI/MP Panama 41)

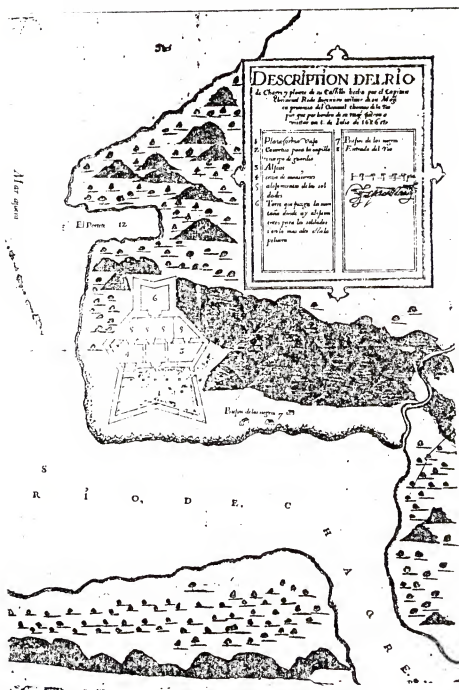


Figure 5-3 San Lorenzo (Source: AGI/MP Panama 40)

had not actually fallen down. Accordingly, not only were de Roda's main proposals rejected, so too was his recommendation to construct a defensive work on the top of the cliff to protect the castle and provide artillery cover for the portete. Inactivity characterized the next decade, though in 1626 and 1628 inspections were again made, each finding the situation more critical than the last.²³ Finally, when a 1631 inspection found the fort unsafe and nearly in ruins, the audiencia held a special meeting to discuss San Lorenzo's desperate plight. It was at this junta that the decision was made to begin construction of de Roda's 1620 plan. This came just in time, for a few months later word arrived that the Antonelli tower had collapsed.²⁴

During preliminary work in the construction of the de Roda fort, Enríquez de Sotomayor, Panama's governor from 1634 to 1638, proposed alterations in de Roda's plans that would elevate the tower another 40 feet in height (to 90 feet total). In addition, he recommended the construction of a trench on the top of the peninsula. This small construction, called "la cortadura," was to be 40 feet long and 20 feet high.²⁵ These proposals are depicted in figure 5-4.

At any rate, the specifics of both de Roda's and Sotomayor's proposals are somewhat irrelevant in that only superficial work was undertaken. To be sure, even after Antonelli's tower had collapsed, cannon were set up in the crumbling ruins. As in the case of the 1620s, periodic

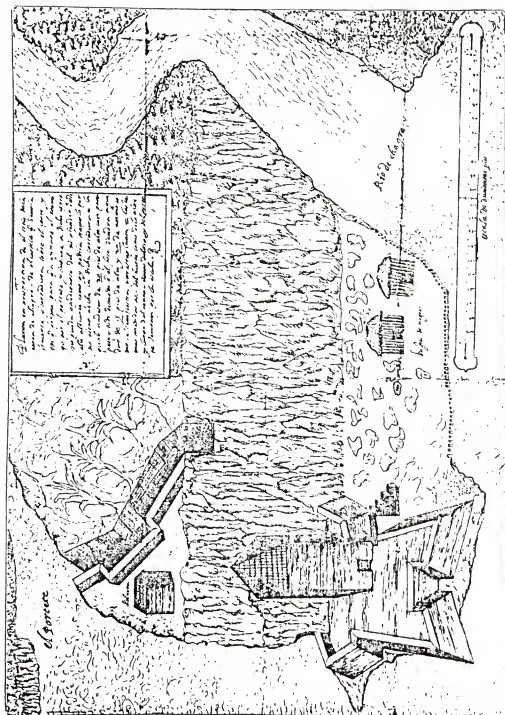


Figure 5-4 Castillo San Lorenzo (Source: AGI/MP Panama 55a)

inspections (1646 and 1656) were ordered, but no action was taken.²⁶ In 1656, however, a small force of English and Dutch pirates appeared off the mouth of the Chagres, and realizing the sad state of San Lorenzo's defenses, they moved against the ruins, bombarding what little was left into rubble. After this affront, there was nothing left of Antonelli's castle. Fortunately the invading forces had been small and unambitious, but the attack did bring about defensive action after years of long neglect.

After 1656 there was nothing salvageable in the Antonelli rubble heap, so the plan that emerged for the refortification of the Chagres mouth concentrated on a new and better site--to wit, the top of the cliff. The project (figure 5-5) was proposed by Fernando Ibáñez de la Riva, the Maestro de Campo (and later governor in 1658-1663).²⁷ The proposed fort was roughly star shaped, with three baluartes (one full baluarte, two half baluartes) on the landward side. The only significant artillery platforms that faced the sea were the two half baluartes (labeled "b" on figure 5-5). Accordingly, little fire power could be directed against ships entering the river. Because of this obvious irregularity, Juan de Somovilla Tejada, a distinguished military engineer in Panama, objected to the proposal.²⁸ Somovilla recognized that the need for a new fortress was great, arguing for the construction of a new fort, "es lo

que pide mas eficaz remedi por lo abenturado que esta aquel sitio, a que el enemigo nos lo ocupe con el daño que se seguria yntentanto pasar la cassa de Cruzes y panamá tan factible por est río." ²⁹ He submitted his own proposal in 1662 which maintained much of the Ibáñez design, but which greatly strengthened the fortress by the addition of a large artillery platform at the point where the river and ocean meet (figure 5-6). ³⁰ This plan, which called for a garrison of some 50 musketeers and 5 artilleros to man the 50 foot-long baluartes, was approved. Construction costs were estimated to be some 100,000 pesos, over 60,000 of which was raised immediately by a "derecho de vino." This fort was soon well underway, the speed of construction quickened by Morgan's brutal invasion of Portobelo in 1668. But if things were calm on the isthmus after 1668, it was a short-lived peace. In 1670 a letter from the governor of Cartagena arrived informing Panamanian authorities of rumors of an impending buccaneer expedition against the isthmus.

The Fall of San Lorenzo

[As in the case back in 1596 when Drake was threatening mischief, so too in 1670 were the governor (Juan Pérez de Guzmán) and other royal officials galvanized into action with defense perparations.] Pérez de Guzmán immediately dispatched 200 men to supplement the 160 man garrison of San Lorenzo, ³¹ and 200 men to reinforce the Portobelo castles. In addition

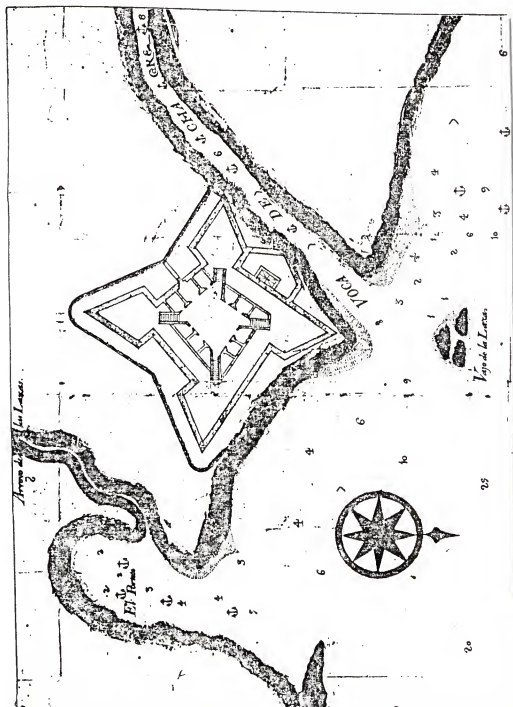


Figure 5-6 San Lorenzo: Proposed Revisions (Source: AGI/MP Panama 83)

to manpower, he ordered San Lorenzo's castellano, Don Pedro Elizalde y Ursúa, to make certain that enough supplies were stored in the castle to withstand a long seige. Additional work was undertaken to strengthen the structure of the fortification, but since much work remained unfinished in stone, the landward defenses were done in wood and dirt. Even so, after a few short weeks the governor was able to report that San Lorenzo was "impregnable."³² Just in case the castle did fall, however, the former castellano of Santiago de la Gloria, Francisco González Salado, was put in charge of a force of 500 men, which he stationed at four strategic points along the Chagres between San Lorenzo and Venta de Cruces. And as a final defense for Panama City, the governor put together a 1,000 man militia, of which 200 were³³ mounted.

The rumors that had been heard in Cartagena were accurate. The scourge of Portobelo, Henry Morgan, indeed was gathering a large force to move against Panama City, an adventure on which he set sail with 38 ships and 1,846 men on³⁴ 18 December, 1670. Morgan's fleet--the largest gathering of corsair vessels in Caribbean history--first called on Santa Catalina, effecting revenge for the loss of the place in 1666. The Spanish put up little resistance, and soon the houses, shops, and forts were sacked.³⁵ After taking Santa Catalina, Morgan wrote in his log, "understanding the Castle

of Chagres blocked our way, I called a council of all the chief captains where it was determined that we should attack the Castle of Chagres and forthwith there was dispatched 470 men in 3 ships under the command of Lt. Col. Joseph Bradley.³⁶"

On that January day when Bradley's ships appeared off San Lorenzo the castle stood more ready than ever to repel a pirate invasion. In addition to the artillery compliment of the new fort on the top of the cliff, eight cannon had been placed in the ruins of Antonelli's sea level platform. In San Lorenzo itself stood over 300 troops with abundant supplies to withstand a long siege. The landward bastions, however, had not yet been completed in stone, but a giant curtain consisting of dirt and rubble held up by massive wooden beams provided a formidable defensive wall. This, moreover, was constructed on the edge of a natural ditch, known as the "quebrada de las lajas," that cut across the peninsula. Thus, the makeshift wall loomed far higher than it actually was. On the top of the wood and dirt palisade were layers of thatched palm roofing which protected the construction from rain erosion. Within the fort numerous thatched palm huts had been erected to house the additional influx of troops that had been ordered by the governor. On the outside of the castle, beyond the quebrada de las lajas, brush and low growth had been cleared back for several

hundred yards. Everyone knew that the path of approach would be across this clearing--the sheer cliffs that bounded the other three sides of the fort being natural barriers of the first order.
37

At dawn Bradley's force landed about a league up the coast at a point called Portete de Naranjos, after realizing that any use of the pirate vessels in the attack would result in disaster in the face of San Lorenzo's strong battery of cannon. From here they marched overland, coming before the clearing in front of the castle in the early afternoon. Within moments a large number of pirates charged against the fort, only to be immediately cut down by a barrage of artillery fire. A second charge was made, but this too ended in large numbers of pirate casualties. And as Esquemeling wrote of the pirates:

At last, after many doubts and disputes among themselves, they resolved to hazard the assault and their lives after a most desperate manner. Thus they advanced toward the castle, with their swords in one hand and fire-balls in the other. The Spaniards defended themselves very briskly, ceasing not to fire at them with their great guns and muskets continually, crying withal: "Come on, ye English dogs, enemies to God and our King. Let your other companions that are behind come on too, Ye shall not go to Panama this bout." After the Pirates had made some trial to climb up the walls, they were forced to retreat, which they accordingly did, resting themselves until night. This being come, they returned to the assault, to try if by the help of their fire-balls they could overcome and pull down the pales before the wall. This they attempted to do, and while they were about it there happened a very remarkable accident,

which gave them the opportunity of the victory. One of the Pirates was wounded with an arrow in his back, which pierced his body to the other side. This instantly he pulled out with great valour at the side of his breast; then taking a little cotton that he had about him, he wound it around the said arrow, and putting it into his musket, he shot it back into the castle. But the cotton being kindled by the powder, occasioned two or three houses that were within the castle, being thatched with palm-leaves, to take fire, which the Spaniards perceived not so soon as was necessary. For this fire meeting with a parcel of powder, blew it up, and thereby caused great ruin, and no less consternation to the Spaniards, who were not able to account for this accident, not having seen the beginning thereof.³⁸

Not only did the powder magazine catch fire, but the wooden supports for the landward curtain also became a blazing inferno. As the Spaniards tried to put out the fire the filling material of the wall began to give way as the fire rendered the structure unsound. As the wall verged on collapse, suddenly a cannon--red hot from the fire--exploded killing dozens of soldiers and sending the wall down. Rocks and gravel spilled into the quebrada le las lajas, filling the natural moat. The breach was wide, but the garrison put up a diligent defense that held for some time. Again, Esquemeling provides captivating reading:

The Spaniards, notwithstanding the great resistance they made, could not hinder the palisades from being entirely burnt before midnight. Meanwhile the Pirates ceased not to persist in their intention of taking the castle. To which effect, although the fire was great, they would creep upon the ground, as nigh unto it as they could, and shoot

amidst the flames, against the Spaniards they could perceive on the other side, and thus cause many to fall dead from the walls. When day was come, they observed all the moveable earth that lay between the pales to be fallen into the ditch in huge quantity. So that now those within the castle did in a manner lie equally exposed to them without, as had been on the contrary before. Whereupon the Pirates continued shooting very furiously against them, and killed great numbers of Spaniards. For the Governor had given them orders not to retire from those posts which corresponded to the heaps of earth fallen into the ditch, and caused the artillery to be transported into the breaches.

Notwithstanding, the fire within the castle still continued, and now the Pirates from abroad used what means they could to hinder its progress, by shooting incessantly against it. One party of the Pirates was employed only to this purpose, and another commanded to watch all the motions of the Spaniards, and take all opportunities against them. About noon the English happened to gain a breach, which the governor himself defended with twenty-five soldiers. Here was performed a very courageous and warlike resistance by the Spaniards, both with muskets, pikes, stones, and swords. Yet notwithstanding, through all these arms the Pirates forced and fought their way, till at last they gained the castle. The Spaniards who remained alive cast themselves downward from the castle into the sea, choosing rather to die precipitated by their own selves (few or none surviving the fall) than ask any quarter for their lives. The Governor himself retreated to the corps du garde, before which were placed two pieces of cannon. Here he intended still to defend himself, neither would he demand any quarter. But at last he was killed with a musket^{shot}, which pierced his skull into the brain.³⁹

The battle had been vicious, with many casualties on both sides. In all the Spaniards had lost upward of 300 men--a few surviving by escaping during the night of the battle. Pirate losses were also high--50 killed outright, another 70

or so severely wounded. Bradley himself died ten days after
the castle's fall.⁴⁰ Even as Bradley lay dying of his
wounds, the able pirates immediately set to rebuilding the
fort so as to prevent any possible Spanish counterattack from
robbing them of their hard-won prize. This was a task in
which they were still engaged five days later (January 12)
when lookouts signalled the arrival of Morgan and the
buccaneer fleet.

Then disaster struck. With the Satisfaction in the van,
Morgan's ships stood in single line formation to enter the
mouth of the river. As the buccaneers in San Lorenzo looked
on, one by one the first five ships in the line smashed onto
the hidden reef before the castle. Chaos ensued, the sixth
ship finally veering away from the rocks. Morgan and the
other buccaneers on the five wrecked ships got off safely,
some supplies even being salvaged, before the vessels sank.
None of the ships could be saved. Although it was a great
loss--compounding the loss of two other ships on reefs near
Santa Catalina--Morgan's expedition still stood well manned
and supplied to move against Panama.

The Expedition to Panama

After Morgan's almost 2,000 buccaneers landed, the march to
Panama began. Richard Norman was put in charge of San
Lorenzo and given a small garrison to maintain control of the

river mouth against possible Spanish countermeasures. The main expedition set out with 7 small ships and 36 canoes. It was reasoned that they would travel up river so long as the water was deep enough--it was, after all the dry season--after which time they would continue on to Venta de Cruces by foot. Between the English and Panama City, however, stood four fortified enclosures and 500 Spanish troops, militia men, and indians, all ready to impede the buccaneer advance.

Immediately upon hearing of the loss of San Lorenzo, Pérez de Guzmán put together a small force to retake the castle. Troops were pulled from the various defensive positions along the river, and these were supplemented by men from the city militia. Before preparations for the counterattack were finished, however, Morgan's advance along the river made the governor's plan obsolete. Instead, all he had accomplished was to weaken the river defenses. Indeed, the Spanish defenders were so weakened that the first palisade, hastily constructed at Dos Brazos just a few miles up river from San Lorenzo, was abandoned as soon as the
41
buccaneers came into sight around the river bend.

Morgan continued past Dos Brazos, steadily moving up the Chagres. Four days out from San Lorenzo the buccaneers stood before Barro Colorado, the strongest of the river defenses. Here too, however, the English found the position deserted, the Spanish captain there, Luis de Castillo, having called an impromptu junta de guerra the night before at which it was

decided to retreat. After all, Castillo argued, he had only 216 men, half that number of guns, and no artillery to defend⁴² against an approaching mob that numbered in the thousands.

It was at Barro Colorado that the river became too shallow for the buccaneer canoes. Accordingly, they left their boats, carrying what supplies they could on their backs. To lighten their loads, however, Morgan instructed that provisions such as food and water be left behind. Instead,⁴³ they would forage and gather food along the way.

Once on foot, however, the invaders found the going difficult. There were no roads or paths, the thick oppressive jungle having to be cut foot by foot. This slow march toward Venta de Cruces continued for three days, during which time little or no food was found, not even in the two remaining defense positions they found--each as empty of Spaniards as the others. Finally, hungry and tired, Morgan's men arrived at Venta de Cruces. Here too they found the town deserted, the principal buildings having been burned in the wake of the Spanish retreat. Again, no food was found save for a few dogs which were soon on the spit.

After Venta de Cruces, the route became much easier as the buccaneers took to the Spanish road. Here, however, they met with some opposition in the form of sniper fire--particularly effective in the deep ravines and canyons through which the road wound. Even so, only a few pirates

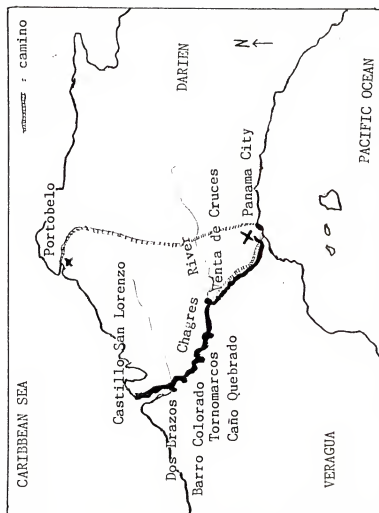


Figure 5-7 Morgan's Route Across Panama, 1671

were killed, the governor himself later admitting that this was little hindrance to the invaders.⁴⁴ Within a few hours the buccaneers stood on the plains before Panama City, and much to their delight, a herd of cattle quietly grazed,⁴⁵ oblivious to the impending mayhem. As the sun set, shimmering across the Pacific, Morgan ordered a grand barbecue and feast. Cows were slaughtered to the beat of English war drums and shouts of hungry buccaneers, while in the streets of Panama, fear squelched all but the most fearful whispers.

Panama

Panama City--if we can leave the buccaneers to their feast for a few moments--was founded in 1519 by Pedrarias. From that early date the city functioned as the principal Spanish outpost on the South Sea in Central America, although by the beginning of the seventeenth century, many smaller towns had been settled, especially once the cattle industry began to grow along the Pacific shores of Veragua (see figure 5-7).⁴⁶ From the time of the city's foundation until the arrival of Morgan's army, no serious threat had ever occurred, and only once had corsair activity caused any real uproar on the south coast.⁴⁷ For this reason, the city was largely without fortifications. One small fortaleza guarded the westward approach to the city at the point where the highway to Las Cruces crossed a small river. The casas reales, sitting on a

small peninsula on the extreme eastern end of the city were also lightly fortified, though the recommendations that Antonelli made in the late sixteenth century for the fortification of this area had not been carried out.⁴⁸

The general lay of the town is presented in figures 5-8, 5-9, and 5-10. The first of these, the least clear, is a Spanish map dating from 1609.⁴⁹ Little is visible, though the *casas reales* can be seen at the mouth of a small (mud-filled) lagoon. Figure 5-9 presents a drawing based on this 1609 map. On this figure the principal streets of the city, major religious buildings, and Panama's two *barrios* are clearly indicated. The last map, a rendition of the old city based on the archaeological evidence at the site, as well as on the 1609 map, presents still more details, clearly indicating the exact location of the major stone structures of the city.⁵⁰ Of the substantial buildings were more than half a dozen monasteries and convents, several large churches, and an array of public buildings as might befit the seat of an imperial *audiencia*.⁵¹

Descriptions of old Panama City abound, typical of which was authored by a French traveler in 1666, just a few years before the Morgan invasion:

Esta ciudad tiene siete u ocho mil casas, las
mad de ellays de madera. Las calles son
bastante hermosas, largas, y rectas. El gran
comercio (de los esclavos) ocupa una de las
mejores casas de la ciudad y nada falta a su
magnificencia. Hay ocho conventos, una
hermosa catedral, y un hospital servido por

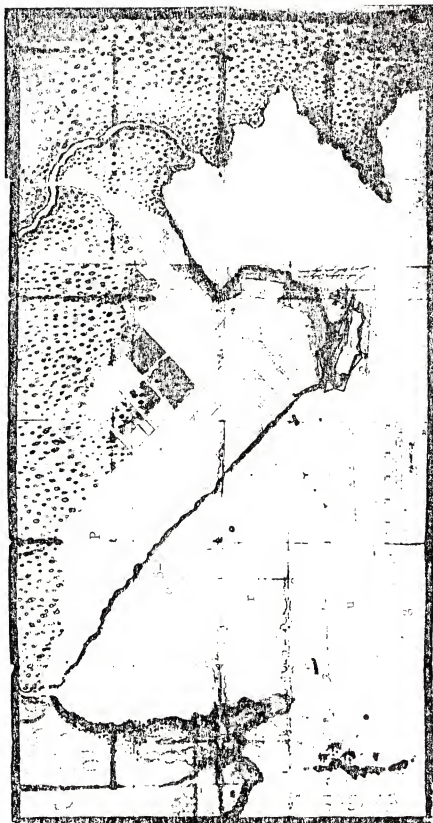


Figure 5-8 Panama City in 1609 (Source: AGI/MP Panama 27)

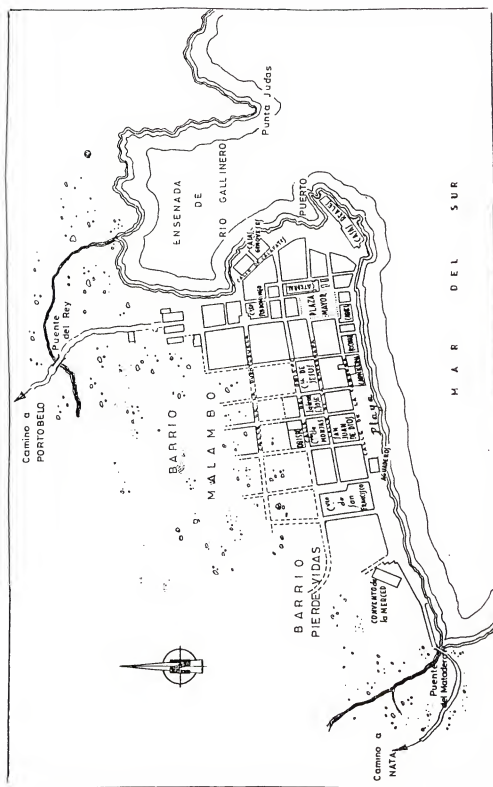


Figure 5-9 Map of Panama City based on AGI/MP Panama 27

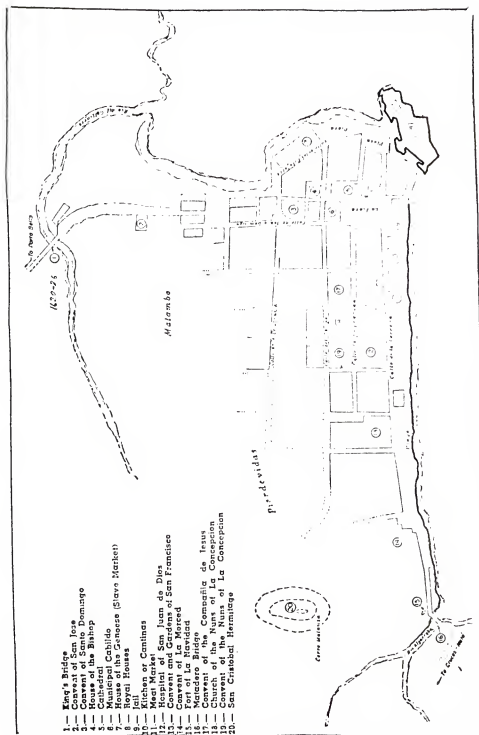


Figure 5-10 Panama circa 1671 (Source: Unpublished Pamphlet "Old Panama")

decorados de bellas quintas y jardines. Siendo que todo el comercio de Chile y del Perú tiene como puerto terminal de Panamá, los almacenes de la ciudad están siempre repletos de mercaderías, y nunca faltan en la bahía algunos navios.⁵²

Esquemeling, too, offers a general description:

There belonged to this city (which is also the head of a bishopric) eight monasteries, whereof seven were for men and one for women, two stately churches and one hospital. The churches and monasteries were all richly adorned with alar-pieces and paintings, huge quantity of gold and silver, with other precious things; all which the ecclesiastics had hidden and concealed (at the time of the invasion). Besides which ornaments here were to be seen two thousand houses of magnificent and prodigious building, being all or the greatest part inhabited by merchants of that country, who are vastly rich. For the rest of the inhabitants of lesser quality and tradesmen, this city contained five thousand houses more. Here were also great numbers of stables, which served for the horses and mules that carry all the plate, belonging as well to the King of Spain as to private men, towards the coast of the North Sea. The neighbouring fields belong to this city and are all cultivated with fertile plantations and pleasant gardens, which afford delicious prospects to the inhabitants the whole year long.

The Genoese had in this city of Panama a stately and magnificent house, belonging to their trade and commerce of negroes. . . . Besides which pile of buildings, there were . . . two hundred warehouses, and a great number of slaves.⁵³

Don Juan Pérez de Guzmán, himself a sick man--bedridden for some weeks before Morgan appeared on the plains at

Panama--knew that not only was it his responsibility to mount a last ditch effort to save the city, but also, that if he failed the consequences would be great. As soon as news came that the pirates had reached Venta de Cruces, the president put a team of 300 slaves to work building earthenworks across the principal approaches to the city, while he himself drilled the 800 man army that been gathering since the fall of San Lorenzo. This force was led to a camp some miles from Panama City. A junta de guerra was held to determine the strategy for the defense of Panama, during which meeting Pérez de Guzmán argued that a forced march out to meet the buccaneers near Venta de Cruces. Panama City, he pointed out, had too few defenses, and, moreover, was wide open across the entire landward flank. Others present, however, argued that a better course of action would be to make a last stand closer to the city (and thus closer to their threatened property). No decision was made, but during the night the issue was decided as hundreds of militiamen deserted the advance camp to return to Panama.⁵⁴ Given little choice, the president and the few remaining troops also fell back.

There was little that could be done to prepare the city for the attack, most of the artillery having been sent over to San Lorenzo weeks before. The streets of the city, however, were barricaded with piles of debris and rubbish. These desperate measures were so obviously useless that a consensus for fighting the pirates on the plain just outside

the city steadily grew. That decision made, on the Sunday before the battle the president addressed a crowd in the plaza in front of the cathedral. He proclaimed,

that all those who were true Spanish catholics, defenders of the Faith and devotees of our Blessed Lady of the Conception should follow my person, being that day at four o'clock in the afternoon, resolved to march out and seek the enemy and defend her purity until we lose our lives. And that he who would refuse to follow me should be held as infamous and a coward in so basely slighted so precise an obligation.⁵⁵

To help build morale, and to demonstrate that he indeed did intend to fight to the death, after his proclamation Pérez de Guzmán distributed all his worldly goods to the various⁵⁶ orders and churches throughout the city.

The next day, Monday, all persons not directly involved with the defense of the city began to board the several ships in the harbor for an escape in case the Spanish lost the impending battle. With them they took most of the city's wealth. The army of Panama then set out to make a camp at Mata Asnillos, a small plain a few miles from the city. Here they waited for two days, each hour strengthened by the arrival of additional militiamen from the outlying provinces, not the least of which was an influx of some 200 men from Veragua under the command of Juan Portuondo Burgueño. By now the cavalry force had grown to over 400 mounts, giving the⁵⁷ defenders a decided advantage for the upcoming battle. The

exact spot Pérez de Guzmán had chosen to make his stand consisted of flat ground--essential for the full and effective use of the cavalry. A large hill was situated on the right end of the chosen battlefield, a mound on which the president counted to defend his flank. Of the 1,200 men gathered on the Spanish line, only 600 had guns, the others armed with pikes, bows and arrows, clubs, and stones. The plan of battle was to attack with the cavalry (under the command of the president himself), while a simultaneous *mélee* would be created by driving a herd of bulls through the pirate rearguard. Then, with Morgan's men in utter confusion, the infantry would close and finish off the invaders.⁵⁸

At 7 o'clock on Wednesday morning, January 28, the buccaneers, fresh from their feast the night before, began to move toward the Spanish line. Their force was divided into 4 columns, Edward Collier commanding the left wing, Morgan the right. As Morgan approached the Spanish encampment he saw for the first time the size of his enemy's forces. Little did he know that they were unarmed and half trained, Morgan only saw that more than a thousand troops stood between his men and Panama. Quickly seeing that his army might be cut to pieces by the Spanish cavalry, Morgan moved to capture the small hill on the Spanish right flank--a move that would greatly reduce the effectiveness of the the mounted forces.

Before Pérez de Guzmán realized what was happening, Morgan achieved control of the hill, outflanking the Spanish line. In desperation the Spanish cavalry charged, and in the confusion, the infantry began running forward to meet the enemy, further reducing the effectiveness of the cavalry. As Earle notes, however, "at least they were running towards the enemy--the first time that this had happened since the fall of San Lorenzo."⁵⁹ By the time the bulls were let loose, Spaniard and Pirate were intertwined, and the bovine charge devastated both forces. Hand to hand fighting went on for over an hour, by the end of which time some 500 of the Spanish force lay dead on the plain.

By 9 o'clock what was left of the Spanish army--Pérez de Guzmán included--were in flying retreat, some towards the last ships in the harbor, others for the jungles of Panama's interior. Don Baltizar Pau y Rocaberti, who had been left in charge of the city, saw that the battle was lost and preceeded to carry out a preplanned demolition of the city's powder magazines and cannon. The explosion of the magazines hurled flaming debris hundreds of feet into the air, much of it landing on the thatched roofs that topped many of the city's houses. As the Spanish began deserting the city on one end, the pirates charged in on the other, finding that their prize was fully ablaze. Some resistance developed in the city's narrow streets, but all shooting was over by noon. For the next day the pirates battled the engulfing fires, but

this effort proved hopeless. Panama City burned to the
60
ground.

The next day the pirates set to digging through the ashes and ruins for the city's treasure, but since most of it had been carried out by fleeing citizens, the amount they gathered was small. Accordingly, Morgan ordered his men to set about raiding the local countryside in search of prisoners and treasure. Also, a small expedition was launched against the islands just off the Panama coast where many refugees were encamped. The searches of the countryside brought in some additional treasure, as well as some 3,000 prisoners, many of whom would eventually pay a 150 peso ransom for their freedom. After staying in the city only a month, the buccaneers returned to San Lorenzo carrying with them 175 mules loaded with silver, 500 additional prisoners, and a host of free blacks that were to be carried back to
61
Jamaica as slaves.

Just as Morgan was about to leave the isthmus, he sent word to Portobelo that unless a substantial ransom were forthcoming, San Lorenzo would be destroyed. When authorities in Portobelo refused to pay the buccaneers, Morgan's men set about demolishing what was left of the castle. Amidst these ruins the pirates divided their treasure, the pickings so slim that each man got only about 75 pesos. Cries of foul play--preserved by Esquemeling for

future generations--did little to increase individual shares. And of the small treasure that was gained in the Panama expedition, much was lost when over a dozen buccaneer ships went down off the Central American coast on the return voyage to Jamaica.

Meanwhile, while the pirates were still entrenched in Panama City, Pérez de Guzmán and what was left of his army took up station in Nata and Penonome, some hundred miles from the city. With only 298 troops left, there was little the president could do to effect any countermeasures against the pirates. Accordingly, he sent several letters to Cartagena and Peru requesting assistance, fearing all the while that Morgan intended to stay in Panama, setting up a permanent English base on the Pacific. When the governor of Cartagena heard of the disaster, instead of mounting a relief expedition, he reinforced his own fortifications in case Cartagena should be the next target on Morgan's list. All that he could do for Panama was to send a shipload of food to Portobelo.⁶²

The reaction in Peru was far different. There Viceroy Lemos immediately raised 7,000 troops for the defense of the kingdom, 400 of which were dispatched on a ship for Panama. This action had been undertaken as soon as the loss of San Lorenzo was reported; when news came that Panama City had also fallen, the relief expedition was expanded to five ships

with almost 2,000 troops. By the time they arrived on the
 isthmus, however, the buccaneers had long since left.⁶³

The 1671 invasion left Panama's defenses broken. No longer could the geography of the isthmus be counted as the primary defense for the Pacific coast; no longer could the fortifications of the north coast be left undermanned, underfunded, and unbuilt. The era of neglect ended with the blood and fire that marked the end of Old Panama. But out of the ruins of 1671 were built new fortifications, the strength of which eclipsed anything the isthmus had seen before.

Notes

1
 Most of Spain's major New World cities were protected by geographical barriers, though Mexico City and the Andean centers more so than Panama. Lyle McAlister, Spain And Portugal in the New World, p. 447.

2
 A useful book detailing the history of transportation on the Chagres--though emphasizing the nineteenth century--is John Minter, The Chagres: River of Westward Passage (New York, 1948). At the time this research began, the only treatment Castillo San Lorenzo had received was in Ernesto J. Castellero Reyes, Grandeza Y decadencia del Castillo de San Lorenzo de Chagres (Panama, 1954), which is little more than a pamphlet (24 pages in length). Little relating to the construction of the fortress is discussed, most of the narrative centering on the Morgan attack. Since then, however, Juan Manuel Zapatero's thorough Historia del Castillo San Lorenzo el Real de Chagre has appeared. My general thoughts on his book are set forth in my review, HAHR 67:3 (1987) pp. 711-712.

3

These first interlopers were French. See Castellero Reyes, Grandeza y Decadencia, p. 3.

4

French activity in 1569 is detailed in Royal Officials to the Crown, Panama City, 30 June 1569, AGI Panamá 33.

5

In 1571 the French pirates on the Chagres intended to explore the river and return "to the River Chagre with ships and many men to rob Panama." See documents reproduced in G. Marcel, Les corsaires Francais au XVIe Siecle dans les Antilles (Paris, 1902), pp. 26-31. Brief mention is made of Drake's river exploration in Andrews, The Spanish Caribbean, p. 138. Also see English Voyages, pp. 16-25; Diego Váldez to the crown, 16 March 1571, AGI Panamá 40 (A copy is also in AGI Panamá 33); and Cristóbal Salinas to the crown, 14 March 1571, AGI Panamá 33.

6

Early Dutch activity is explored in Engel Sluiter, "Dutch-Spanish Rivalry in the Caribbean Area, 1594-1609," HAHR 28:2 (1948) p. 171. Sluiter notes, interestingly enough, that after 1572 Dutch activity in and around Panama fell off sharply as energies were focused on other areas of the Caribbean. Useful information is also contained in Cornelis CH. Goslinga, The Dutch in the Caribbean, p. 54.

7

Much of the general defense situation of the northern coast of Panama is noted in the first pages of chapter 3 of this study. Also see the general discussion in Andrews, The Spanish Caribbean, pp. 136-148.

8

Descriptions are available in Jorge Juan and Antonio Ulloa, A Voyage to South America (New York, 1964), pp. 59-61. Also see "Plano del Castillo de Chagre y Costa Inmediata, (1600?)" AGI Mapas Y Planos, Panamá 21. This map, however, does not give a detailed rendering of Antonelli's castle.

9

Servicio Histórico Militar (Madrid), Recopilación Aparici, Siglo XVI, sec. 2 vol. vi, 1.5.6

10

An early mention of Antonelli's fort is contained in Antonelli, "Memoria del coste de las fortificaciones de Cartagena, Portobelo, Chagre, Panamá, y Habana, 1590" AGI Patronato 193.

11

"Castillo de San Lorenzo que esta en la boca del Río de Chagre que se está cayendo," Cristóbal de Toda, 1620, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 36; Iníquez, Bautista Antonelli, p. 60; Zapatero, San Lorenzo, p. 61. Also see three reports written by Antonelli to the crown: letter of 15 May, 1595, AGI Patronato 193 (which has details of initial work on the castle); letter of 11 July 1595, AGI Panamá 44 (which discusses his proposals to build a large fort); and letter of 20 October 1595, AGI Panamá 44 (which deals in general with work in Chagres and Portobelo). A useful collection of letters from Antonelli to the crown relating to the defenses of Panama (some of which are cited here) is Juan Agustín Cean-Bermúdez, Noticias de los arquitectos y arquitectura de España desde su restauración 4 vols. (Madrid, 1829), pp. 248-272.

12

See Zapatero, San Lorenzo, p. 55; Iníquez, Bautista Antonelli, p. 72. Letter of Antonelli to the crown, 24 May 1596, AGI Panamá 44; and letter of Villanueva and Antonelli to the crown detailing Drake's attack, AGI Panamá 44.

13

Anderson, Old Panama, pp. 370-373; N.A., A Full Relation of Another Voyage into the West Indies Made by Sir Francis Drake from Plimmouth, 28 August 1595 (London, 1652).

14

Zapatero, San Lorenzo, p. 57; Servicio Histórico Militar, Recopilación Aparici, Siglo XVI, "Tierra Firme No. 2," Sign 2.3.3.13.

15

Iníquez, Bautista Antonelli, pp. 77-78; Antonelli to the crown, 24 June 1597, AGI Panamá 44; Servicio Histórico Militar, Recopilación Aparici, Siglo XVI, "Tierra Firme no. 1," sign 6.700.2.3.1.7. Construction difficulties resulting from the strange terrain of the site are discussed in ANP Susto Documents, vol. x, document 193, "Expediente que trata sobre fabricas y guerra de Tierra Firme, 1600."

16

ANP Cédula of 3 July 1603.

17

Servicio Histórico Militar, Recopilación Aparici, "Correspondencia de los gobernadores, 1608," sign 2.3.5.6; Zapatero, San Lorenzo, p. 61.

18

"Castillo San Lorenzo . . ." 1620, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 36.

19

Cristóbal de Roda to the crown, 1620, AGI Panamá 87.

20

Ibid., and his report, "fortificaciones de Tierra Firme," AGI Panamá 87. Also see the "acta de la junta de guerra", 13 March 1620, AGI Panamá 87 (reproduced in Zapatero, San Lorenzo, p. 62).

21

Descripción del Río de Chagre y planta de su castillo hecha por el Capitan Cristóbal de Roda. . . en el año 1626," AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 40; "Prespectiva del Castillo de Chagre hecha por el capitan Christóbal Roda. . . primero de Julio 1626," AGI Mapas Y Planos, Panamá 41.

22

"Fortificaciones de Tierra Firme," AGI Panamá 87. The proposal was similar in some respects to de Roda's forts in Cartagena (the one at the Boca Grande), see "Plata forma que a heco Xpóval de Roda. . . 1617," AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 32.

23

ANP cédula of 24 May 1626 sent to Tomás de la Raspurú; "Memoria sobre fortificaciones," by the Conde de Chinchón, viceroy of Peru, 17 May 1629, AGI Panamá 87.

24

Papers of the junta de guerra in Panama, 9 February 1631, AGI Panamá 87; Zapatero, San Lorenzo, p. 77 notes that one reason for the tower's collapse (and continued construction problems at the site) was the low quality of lime used in cement there.

25

"Planta en prespectiva de el sitio de la Voca de Chagre--de el Castillo que deveria hacerse y Contadura sobre el Cerro y en que forma que si entrare el enemigo por el Portete y subiera a dicho cerro no pueda apoderarse del ni ofender desde alli al fuerte como oy podria hacerlo por no estar hecha la dicha cortadura. . . año 1637," AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 55a.

26

ANP cédula of 21 August 1646; Zapatero, San Lorenzo, p. 85.

27

"Planta de la fortificación de la boca del río de Chagre, 18 Marzo 1660," AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 71; "A.B.C. diario desta Planta, año 1660," AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 72.

28

"Informe sobre fortificaciones," 9 July 1661, AGI Panamá 89.

29

As quoted in Zapatero, San Lorenzo, p. 109.

30

"Plano de Castillo de la Boca del Río Chagre, de la situación del Portete y desembacadura del Arroyo de las Lajas, y el Río Chagre," by Juan de Somovilla Tejada, 1667, AGI Mapas Y Planos, Panamá 83. Also see Zapatero, San Lorenzo, p. 95 and "Informe sobre fortificaciones, 1667," AGI Panamá 87.

31

See Earle, The Sack of Panama, pp. 173-174; Evidence of various (60) witnesses, 1671, AGI Panamá 93; "Informe sobre el enemigo con 40 embarciones en el Río Chagre," Portobelo, 31 January 1671, AGI Panamá 93.

32

Relación of Pérez de Guzmán, 19 February 1671, AGI Panamá 93; Zapatero, San Lorenzo, pp. 117-119. Portobelo was also slightly strengthened ("Informe," 1 February 1671, AGI Panamá 93.

33

Pérez de Guzmán to the Queen, 19 February 1671 and Marichalar to the Queen, 25 October 1671, AGI Panamá 93; Testimonies of Sabredo and Castillo, AGI Panamá 93.

34

Zapatero, San Lorenzo, p. 115 puts the numbers at 37 ships and 2336 men. The figures I have used are from Earle, The Sack of Panama, p. 179. In the strictest sense, Morgan was a privateer rather than a pirate in that he held a letter of marque from Jamaica's governor, Thomas Modyford.

35

The entire Santa Catalina connection is detailed in various documents in AGI Santa Fé 223, the entire legajo being devoted to the topic. Also see Donald Rowland, "Spanish Occupation of the Island of Old Providence or Santa Catalina, 1641-70." Earle discusses the island in the first chapters of his The Sack of Panama.

36

Earle, The Sack of Panama, pp. 185-186.

37

Pérez de Guzmán to the Queen, 19 February 1671, AGI Panamá 93; Earle, The Sack of Panama, p. 188; Ernesto J. Castellero Reyes, "Toma del Castillo de San Lorenzo de Chagres por los piratas," Revista Lotería 220 (June, 1974) pp. 73-77.

38

Unlike his description of Morgan's invasion of Portobelo, except for his constant vilifications against Morgan, here Esquemeling seems to be a reliable source. See Esquemeling, The Buccaneers of America, p. 200. The Bradley landing had been opposed by a group of free black militia (about 50 in number), but they had little impact on the outcome of the invasion, "Relación de la pérdida isla Santa Catalina, Castillo de Chagre, y Ziudad de Panamá segun la declarazió echa por Don Fernando Mohedano de Sabreda," 1671, Archivo General de Simancas Valladolid, 1. 2692 (as quoted in Zapatero, San Lorenzo, p. 115).

39

Esquemeling, The Buccaneers of America, pp. 201-202; Also see Castellero, "Toma del Castillo de San Lorenzo."

40

The battle of San Lorenzo is also detailed in Anderson, Old Panama, pp. 410-414 and in Earle, The Sack of Panama, pp. 187-196. Also see C.H. Haring, The Buccaneers in the West Indies, pp. 163-168, an account which closely follows Esquemeling.

41

Principal sources for the "River Campaign," as Earle calls it, are Pérez de Guzmán to the Queen, 19 February 1671, AGI Panamá 93 and report of Francisco González Salado, AGI EC 461b. Also see Ernesto J. Castellero Reyes, "Odisea a través istmo hacia Panamá," Revista Lotería 221 (July 1974) pp. 82-90; Anderson, Old Panama, pp. 415-421, which presents a day-by-day account of events. Another useful source detailing not only the transisthmian march, but also the whole Panama adventure is The Present State of Jamaica to which is added an Exact Account of Sir Henry Morgan's Voyage to Panama (London, 1683).

42

Pérez de Guzmán to the Queen, 19 February 1671, AGI Panamá 93, which, as one might expect, is very hard on Castillo. Don Juan did not want to bear more of the blame for the loss of the isthmus than necessary.

43

Report of Salado, AGI EC 461b; Anderson, Old Panama, p. 416 and Esquemeling, The Buccaneers of America, pp. 207-208.

44

Pérez de Guzmán to the Queen, 19 February 1671, AGI Panamá 93.

45

Ibid., and Earle, The Sack of Panama, p. 207.

46

A useful review of the growth of the Pacific coast as an important area of Spanish settlement is Omar Jaén Suárez, Hombres y ecología en Panamá, (Panama, 1981). Also see his El hombre y la tierra en Nata de 1700 a 1850 (Panama, 1971) and Análisis regional y espacio derivado--regiones y regionalización en Panamá (Panama, 1974). María del Carmen Mena García, La Sociedad de Panamá also contains useful information, especially pp. 43-132, although much of this deals with Panama City alone.

47

Some details on pirate activity in the Pacific is found in Peter Gerhard, Pirates on the West Coast of New Spain, 1575-1742 (Glendale, CA, 1960). The most important pirate activity off Panama occurred in the late sixteenth century when John Oxenham gained access to the Pacific and began a series of raids on the Pearl Islands. he was subsequently captured and tried by authorities in Panama. Numerous accounts of the Oxenham voyage are presented in English Voyages: City of Panama to the Crown, 15 April 1577, AGI Panamá 41; Royal Officials to the Crown, Nombre de Dios, 17 April 1577, AGI Panamá 33; and, most importantly, Deposition of John Oxenham made at Ronconcholón, 20 October 1577, AGI Panamá 41. Some discussion of Oxenham is found in Andrews, The Spanish Caribbean, pp. 140-143.

48

Juan B. Sosa, Panamá la vieja: con motivo del cuarto centenario de su fundación (Panama, 1919), p. 34; "Carta de Maestro de Campo, Juan de Texada y del ingeniero Juan B. Antonelli sobre. . . la ciudad de Panamá," 10 February 1591, ANP Susto Documents, vol ix, document 169.

49

"Discreción de la ciudad de Panamá y el sitio donde están las casas reales y la Ysla de Perico y las demas Yslas," 1609, AGI Mapas Y Planos, Panamá 27.

50

This drawing is presented in a short pamphlet entitled "Old Panama," by Rubén Darío Carles (Panama, n.d.), back cover.

51

The great stone buildings of Panama, of course, were far outnumbered by wooden houses and structures. Of the stone buildings, principal were the casas reales, which contained the audiencia palace, the president's palace, the treasury, customs house, and other official offices. Near these were the cabildo, jail, and munitions dump. To the north of the main plaza, near the waterfront, was a giant slave market--perhaps the largest building in the city. On the plaza itself stood the cathedral and the bishop's palace, the ruins of which remain imposing to this day. There were numerous stone monasteries (la Merced, San Francisco, Santo Domingo, Jesuit house, San José, Monjas de la Concepción), each of which had great churches. Two hermitages (San Cristóbal and Santa Ana) stood on the outside of the city. Like Portobelo, the hospital was manned by the order of San Juan de Dios. Absolutely the best description of Old Panama is Juan Sosa, Panamá la vieja, which provides details on each of these structures. Also useful is a brief article which relates information about the city found in the AGI dating from the first years of the seventeenth century: Ernesto J. Castellero Reyes, "Panamá la vieja a medio siglo antes de su destrucción," Revista Lotería 245 (July 1976) pp. 50-54.

52

As quoted in Panamá la vieja, p. 29. An earlier description, the often quoted relación of 1607, notes the following data. The city was 487 by 1,412 paces in size, with four principal streets running north and south, and four running east and west. In the city's monasteries were 45 monks and 24 nuns, and in addition to the 550 vecinos, the city boasted some 50 foreign residents and 3,700 slaves. At that time there were only 372 wooden houses, these augmented by 100 more thatched huts. Only 8 stone buildings had as yet been constructed. (As noted in Haring, Trade and Navigation, pp. 186-187).

53

Esquemeling, The Buccaneers of America, p. 224.

54

Pérez Guzmán to the Queen, 19 February 1671, AGI Panamá 93; Also Ernesto J. Castellero Reyes, "El Asalto a la ciudad de Panamá," Revista Lotería 222-223 (August/September, 1974), pp. 39-49.

In the sixteenth century Panama's militia strength was as follows: 1543: 300 foot, 40 horse; 1554: 400 foot, 30 horse; 1577: 500 foot, 50 horse (Hoffman, The Spanish Crown

and the Defense of the Caribbean, p. 263). The only defensive structure in the city was the small fortaleza situated at the point where the road to Venta de Cruces entered the city over a small bridge. The construction of the fort took 8 months, it being "buena de cal y madera y la piedra." Named La Navidad, the fort never saw any action, being so small as to be effectively useless (its full complement of soldiers was only 15). See ANP Susto Documents, "Tracta de fabricas y guerra de Tierra Firme, 1600," vol. x, document 193.

55

"Acta" of Pérez de Guzmán, 25 January 1671, as translated by Earle, The Sack of Panama pp. 212-213.

56

The inventory of Don Juan's goods is contained in AGI EC 461b. Earle, The Sack of Panama, has a brief outline of the valuables on p. 213.

57

Pérez de Guzmán to the queen, 19 February 1671, AGI Panamá 93.

58

Ibid., also see his "Relación" of events, in AGI Panamá 93 and Pérez de Guzmán to Viceroy Lemos, 9 February 1671, AGI Panamá 72.

59

Earle, The Sack of Panama, p. 221; Consejo Municipal de Panamá, Mundanza, traslado, y reconstrucción de la ciudad de Panamá en 1673 (Panama, 1954).

60

Pérez de Guzmán to Lemos, 9 February 1671, AGI Panamá 72. Esquemeling, ever ready to condemn Morgan, (who he thought had cheated him of his spoil of the Panama adventure) asserts that Morgan himself set fire to the city to further confuse the defenders. No other sources, however, support this contention.

61

Earle, The Sack of Panama, pp. 243-244; Esquemeling, The Buccaneers of America, p. 238; Haring, Buccaneers in the West Indies, p. 195; and Anderson, Old Panama, p. 434 (where the figure 200 pesos is given).

62

Statement of Ulloa, 14 February 1671, AGI Panamá 93.

63

The information regarding the Peruvian response comes from Earle, The Sack of Panama, pp. 226-236.

PANAMA'S DEFENSES IN THE LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
1668-1700

In the years directly after the sacks of Portobelo and Panama, corsair activity on the high seas--and especially in the waters around Panama--showed no signs of slowing. Indeed, for the residents of Tierra Firme, life again became as difficult as it had been during the last days of the sixteenth century. Unlike in the days of Drake and Hawkins, however, Spain now was far less prepared to counter the foreign threat to the empire.¹

During the last third of the seventeenth century, Spain continued on a path of seemingly uncontrolled decline. Once the greatest power in Europe, during the reign of Charles II she ranked no higher than third or fourth--and distantly so behind France, Holland, and England. One of the important causes of this military decline was a very obvious reduction in the quantity of silver returns from the New World. At the beginning of the century, specie from New Spain and Peru supplied the Catholic Kings with sizeable sums of hard cash

which they often used to further the Hapsburg cause in Europe. In the aftermath of the Thirty Years War, however, Spain faced continued decline in both military and economic power which was compounded by shortages of funds, reaching a nadir in the 1670s and 1680s. New World specie, while not as plentiful as during the reigns of Philip III and his successor, still played a critical role in Spanish budgeting in the dismal days of Charles II: Panama, therefore, continued to be a key region in the Hapsburg World Empire. Defense initiatives, therefore, continued--and with far greater energy than might be expected given Spain's declining stature in Europe.

The Sharp Invasion, 1679

In 1679 Portobelo became the focus of another buccaneer attack. Encouraged by the successes of Morgan, dozens of Jamaican captains took to the high seas against Spain's Caribbean settlements. Among these were Captains Coxon and ² Sharp, who in 1679 purchased a privateering commission from the governor at Port Royal for ten pieces of eight: the letter of marque granted them the right to act as privateers for the English nation for three months. The buccaneers, however, altered the document to make it valid for three years. Although the pirates had no plans to attack any large Spanish ports when they set out for the Main, after having

had but little success on the high seas, they decided to attempt to replicate Morgan's feat at Portobelo.

Just as Morgan had done ten years earlier, when Coxon and Sharp arrived at the isthmus they left their ships some twenty leagues from Portobelo and made their final approach in fifteen canoes.³ Once landed on the Panamanian coast, Sharp's 200 men found themselves still some distance to the south of their goal. For three nights they made their way through the sickly jungles toward Portobelo. As Sharp later wrote, "by day we concealed ourselves in the woods and took our rest, for then we dared not to travel, fearing lest we should be discovered by the Spaniards, our mortal enemies, whom we intended to plunder. . . ."⁴

Their caution, however, was frustrated when, once arrived before their target, they were confronted by a black slave who escaped to give alarm. But the pirates were close behind, capturing Portobelo before a proper defense could be organized. In the brief conflict there were no significant losses to either side because the corsairs had entered the town from the east end, coming down the valley of the Río Cascajal. By using this approach they were able to avoid the three Portobelo forts, all the defenses of which were oriented towards the western end of the harbor. The pirates never attempted to take the castles, and the Spanish garrisons, content to stay behind the protective walls of Santiago de la Gloria and San Gerónimo, made no effort to

purge the city of the invaders. Women and children would have to fend for themselves. The English remained in Portobelo only two days: once they had extracted loot which would yield forty English pounds per pirate, they took their leave and returned to their ships.

Another description of the Sharp-Coxon expedition against Portobelo relates that Indians, presumably Cuna, aided the English in their attack. In retribution, according to this source, the Spanish subsequently burned several Cuna villages. A letter to the king dated in 1682, three years after the attack, also makes mention of English-Indian collusion, reporting that 200 Indians from the Chepo area⁵ joined with 80 pirates in the attack.

Further Problems with the Buccaneers

The entire realm of Tierra Firme became the target of other attacks in the decade after 1679. Sharp and Coxon returned to Panama, this time via the Mar del Sur and ravaged the south coast for nearly a year before sailing to England. In the period 1680-86, numerous attacks were launched against the westernmost province of Panama, Veragua, and the deserted Darién became an open highway for northern Europeans seeking access to the unprotected waters of the Pacific. In both 1675 and 1678 Chepo was attacked,⁶ and in 1685-86 Chepo, Remedios, Alange,⁷ Los Santos and San Lorenzo were sacked by the buccaneers. Things became so bad throughout the

Caribbean that in 1685 the Consejo de Indias estimated the buccaneers' strength in the region to be as high as sixteen ships, representing 3,650 tons in shipping and 3,097 men with 350 cannon.⁸

As if this were not enough, when Franco-Spanish relations worsened as a result of the very active foreign policy of Louis XIV,⁹ French activity in the Caribbean increased dramatically. In 1680 a fleet under Vice Admiral D'Estrées toured the principal ports of the Spanish Indies to remind the Spanish crown that the arm of French military power had a long reach. This action frightened many officials in the New World who came to fear that a French invasion of Panama could be expected at any time.¹⁰ Back in Europe a short war between France and Spain broke out in 1683, which resulted in a quick defeat of the Spanish army. During this conflict a French commander named Gabaret sailed a small fleet into Portobelo to demand the return of prisoners taken by Spain in the Third Dutch War, but no military action resulted.¹¹

Increased tension with France was offset to some extent by better relations with England. Over the course of 1671-1689, the position of England in the Caribbean was transformed from one of extreme antagonism towards the Hispanic World Empire to one of a wartime ally against the common foe personalized in France's Louis XIV.¹² After 1680,

English authorities in Jamaica began to take action against the activities of the buccaneers--such a policy could only result in better Spanish-English relations. The English king, Charles II, had resisted Spanish efforts to stamp piracy from the Caribbean during the first part of his reign, but the outrages of Morgan and others became so embarrassing in the aftermath of the attacks on the Isthmus that action had to be taken. Ironically, the most enthusiastic prosecutor of pirates operating out of Jamaica was none other than the new lieutenant governor of the island, Henry Morgan.

The Strategic Response to Continued Incursions

Spanish authorities were very worried about the continued activity of the buccaneers and the French in and about Tierra Firme. The voyage of D'Estrées had erroneously convinced the crown that the buccaneers were controlled by the French and that the "prime threat now would be the seizure of Portobelo¹³ and Panama." The Spanish response, accordingly, centered on the defense of the Isthmus. The undertakings in Panama--with the exception of a trouble-plagued Portobelo--support the thesis Bensusan developed in his dissertation: "Spain's defense activity was well planned, energetic, and quite effective."¹⁴

One of the defense reforms undertaken in the decades after the Morgan attack was in the naval forces--the coast guard and the Barlovento Squadron--which, during the

intervals between flotas, guarded the north coast of Panama. The first reaction of Viceroy Lemos in Peru when he had heard of Morgan's attack on Portobelo in 1668 was to initiate plans to gather a large naval force in Tierra Firme to retake Jamaica from the English.¹⁵ While this "northern design" never got beyond the planning stages, strengthening of the naval forces in Panama did occur in the 1680s. The Barlovento Squadron, out of existence since 1667, was reformed and assigned to Cartagena with orders to regularly patrol the Isthmus as far as Portobelo. In addition, four vessels were assigned to Portobelo, and still another ship was allocated to Portobelo in 1685. At that same time the whole Portobelo coast guard fleet was placed under the direct control of the commander of the Barlovento Squadron in Cartagena.¹⁶ The Portobelo ships, however, could not be taken out of isthmian waters. By 1693, the coast guard fleet at Portobelo was one of the largest such units in the New World:¹⁷

Portobelo: 1 frigate; 4 galleys; 2 demi-galleys; 6 sloops

Cartagena: 1 frigate; 4 galleys; and some sloops

Panama: 2 frigates; 5 galleys; and sloops

Veracruz: 2 frigates; 4 galleys; and sloops

Another important area of improvement was in the numbers of troops stationed on the Isthmus. In the first years after

the attacks on Portobelo and Panama, the garrisons of those cities were supplemented to deter any further pirate actions while the forts were being restored. In 1676 Panama City received 1,000 additional soldiers and many of these men were stationed in Portobelo until the construction of new fortifications was well underway.¹⁸ Table 6-1 lists troop strengths throughout the Caribbean and reinforcements sent to various locations during the last quarter of the seventeenth century.¹⁹

Fortifications of Panama City and the Río Chagre

More important than naval reform and troop reinforcements, however, was the construction of fortifications. San Lorenzo, thoroughly destroyed by Bradley in 1671, was reconstructed in 1677, and the rebuilding of Panama City in the aftermath of Morgan's attack became the largest defense project in isthmian history.²⁰

All of the defensive measures of the last part of the seventeenth century were paid for by the annual situado, or military subsidy, which was paid out of the Lima treasury. Large increases in the situado amounts during the years under review here (table 6-2) attest to the military activity in Panama.²¹ Even with these massive amounts of treasure being spent, the President of Panama was still able to complain that there was not enough in the hacienda real to pay the

Table 6-1

Troop Strengths throughout the Caribbean, 1675-1695.

A) Troop strengths, 1675

Portobelo	400 infantry	Panama	600 infantry
Cartagena	600 infantry plus militia	Caracas	150 infantry plus militia
Santa Marta	100 infantry	Maracaibo	100 infantry
Campeche	250 infantry	Honduras	80 infantry
Veracruz	700 infantry plus militia and artillery	Habana	400 infantry plus militia and artillery
Mérida	600 infantry plus militia	Guatemala	100 infantry plus militia
Costa Rica	600 militia	Cumaná	75 infantry
Trinidad	60 infantry plus artillery	Margarita	75 infantry plus militia
Nicaragua	500 militia	Santiago	300 infantry
Florida	350 infantry plus artillery	Puerto Rico	200 infantry plus artillery
Santo Domingo	330 infantry plus artillery		

Table 6-1, continued

B) Reinforcements authorized by Crown, 1677-1695

	1677	1680	1683	1685	1688	1691	1695
Portobelo	100	100	150	-	100	-	-
Panama	100	100	150	-	100	-	-
Cartagena	100	250	100	-	100	100	50
Veracruz	100	100	100	200	100	-	-
Havana	100	80	-	300	100	50	50
Campeche	40	200	50	100	-	-	50
Florida	40	100	-	-	50	-	-
Santiago	-	200	-	-	50	-	-
Puerto Rico	40	200	50	-	50	-	50
Santo Domingo	40	200	50	-	50	100	200
Eastern Venezuela	50	50	50	100	50	-	50
Caracas	40	-	50	-	40	-	50
Maracaibo	40	200	50	-	40	-	50
Santa Marta	40	100	-	-	40	-	-
Central America	40	-	50	50	59	50	50

C) Troop Strengths, 1695

Portobelo	550 infantry	Panama	900 infantry plus militia
Cartagena	850 infantry plus militia	Campeche	340 infantry plus militia
Veracruz	850 infantry plus militia	Havana	500 infantry plus militia

Source: these data have been compiled from Bensusan, pp. 17, 87, 152.

Table 6-2

Annual situado Payments to Panama.

1670	105,000 pesos
1671	250,000 pesos
1672	217,622 pesos
1673	275,314 pesos
1680-89	1,800,400 pesos
1690	406,000 pesos
1698	275,314 pesos

Source: Céspedes del Castillo, pp. 262-263

22

troops their regular wages. The project which represented the greatest cost to the crown, the fortification of Panama City, was, however, carried out, and by the turn of the century that place was one of the best fortified cities in the Empire. But the cost was a large drain on imperial finances, perhaps contributing to Spain's economic crisis in the 1680s.

The New Panama

The fire that had robbed Morgan's buccaneers of their hoped-for treasure also signaled the end of old Panama: the destruction had been so thorough--and the site demonstrated to be so unprotected--that as soon as the pirates left Spanish authorities began to tender proposals to move the audiencia seat to a better location. The principal advocate of moving the city to a place six miles to the west of the original site was the newly appointed governor, Don Antonio Fernández de Córdoba, who arrived just after the English returned to Jamaica. Such a great and expensive endeavor as moving the whole city, however, required approval from Spain. Meanwhile, as proposals and letters made their plodding way through the imperial bureaucracy and across the Atlantic, the vecinos of Panama reoccupied the ruins of their once great town. But where stately buildings and imposing houses once stood, now were built thatched huts and temporary shelters. A description of conditions some nine months after the sack

is presented in a letter from Miguel Francisco de Marichalar to the crown:

La casa real con la audiencia y almacenes reales de ella esta en pie, pero maltratadísima, de tal suerte, que se administra justicia en sitio algo indecente. El convento de la Merced que esta afuera de la ciudad también permanece, pero amenazando ruina, porque la cercanía de la casa de la pólvora que se quemó la quebranto mucho.

El convento de religiosos recoletos de San Agustín, que también estaba fuera de la ciudad, es el que ha quedado solamente sin lesión y algunas casillas de los arraboles, que servían de habitación a negros y mulatos, todo lo restante, del pueblo se abrasó. Con tanta violencia, que ni aun en las casas de piedra y conventos quedó madera que no se quemase, de que ha resultado que las paredes que han quedado de los conventos de San Francisco, religiosas de la Concepción, el de la Compañía, Iglesia Catedral Capital, casas del Cabildo, y otras, han quedado tan atormentadas que por instantes se están cayendo y es imposible que sobre ellas se puede edificar.²³

Meanwhile, as soon as news of the destruction of Panama reached Spain, strong resolve developed for the immediate refortification of Panama City and the Río Chagres. For quick relief, three ships were dispatched with artillery, munitions, and troops. In August and September the consejo debated Córdoba's proposals for the future of the isthmian capital, eventually endorsing his recommendations without reservation.²⁴ Part of the argument for moving the city read as follows:

El comercio del Perú se halla con tanto horror de este sitio por las muchas muertes y enfermedades que en las ocasiones de armada han experimentado, que se irán a vivir al

Ancón, haciendo allí sus habitaciones por reconocer que los vecinos están imposibilitados de poderlos hospedar, por la falta de caudal para poderlos hacer. En fin, señora, este reino está en el más lamentable estado, que se puede considerar, los vecinos desnudos, pobres, sin viviendas y todos enfermos y han sido tantas las puertas desde la invasión, que me aseguran que han muerto mas de 3,000 personas.²⁵

Still, and despite the obvious logistical, defense, and health reasons for moving the city, some opposition developed in the merchant community where fear abounded that they, rather than the crown, would bear the financial brunt of the move. Further, many opponents pointed out, the site selected for the new city, though situated on a peninsula, actually would have less of a harbor than Old Panama--not much of an argument considering that only small boats could approach either location.²⁶

The opposition, however, failed to persevere, the audiencia voting on 24 October 1672 to move the city as proposed by Córdoba. Immediate financing was provided by a 40,000 peso grant from the Lima treasury. The actual founding ceremony was delayed until 21 January 1673, a ceremony at which Córdoba presided. His energy and effectiveness in galvanizing a coherent response to the 1671 disaster certainly elevates him to rank with Panama's best presidents, but his service to the isthmus was short lived, for in April, just as his new city was beginning to take

form, he died of one of the many diseases that raged in squalid Panama's feotid temporary shelters.

The construction of the new city was not simply an affair of erecting new fortifications. These were important, to be sure, but the greatest expense came from the construction of the dozens of public buildings--royal, religious, and municipal--that took place between 1673 and the end of the decade. Figure 6-1, dating from 1673 clearly²⁷ indicates the lay of the city on the peninsula at Ancón.

The plaza was situated at the center of the city, and on the west end of this was located the new cathedral. The audiencia and other royal buildings, however, were located far from the plaza on a small sliver of land that juts out from the main peninsula. Most of the other buildings labeled on the map are various convents and churches, although the majority of the structures drawn represent private houses. At the top of the map (the west side of the city) the principal fortifications of the city are drawn ("A, F, and L"). These three great bastions (San José, La Mano del Tigre, and Barlovento) provided ample defense against an attack from the landward side. Note, however, that near "L" there is a small portion that was to be left unfortified. In figure 6-2, a plan drawn in 1675 by the new president of Panama, Alonso Mercade de Villacorta, this small section is²⁸ seen as fortified.

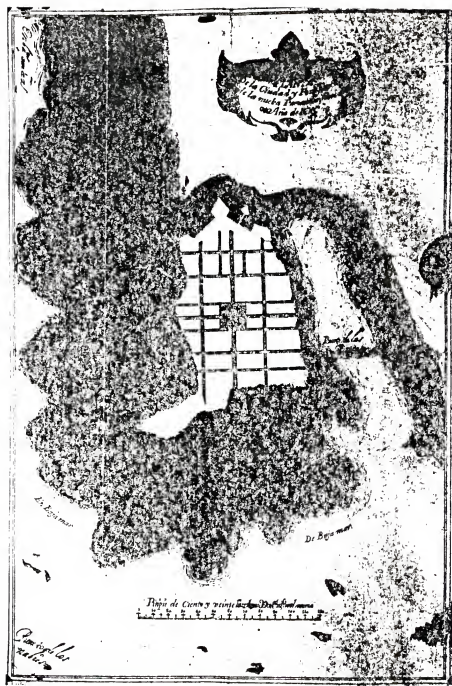


Figure 6-2 Panama City 1675 (Source: AGI/MP Panama 87)

After two years of construction, most of the city was still unbuilt--indeed work on the fortifications did not begin until 1675. Within the city, in 1675 the cathedral was half finished, the cabildo and jail remained undone, and the president's house and the audiencia chambers had not even²⁹ been started. The principal cause for the slow rate of construction was a shortage of money. And because most of the public works were financed by the situado from Peru, things received a further setback when a series of strong³⁰ earthquakes hit the southern viceroyalty in the 1680s.

Even so, the walls of the fortifications at the west end of the city began to rise in 1675 and 1676. Construction was overseen by Mercado de Villacorta himself, serving then as both president and maestro del campo. The artillery embrasures provided by the three bastions were supplemented by reinforcements sent from Spain, so that by 1677 regular troops stationed in the city amounted to some 1,000 men in 8³¹ infantry companies.

In addition to Villacorta, other noted engineers such as Luis Venegas Osorio and Bernardino Caballos y Arce oversaw construction of the city walls, which by the early 1680s were rising on the north, south, and east peripheries of the city. By 1686, the constructions were finished as Ceballos y Arce³² set the last stone. The fortifications done, the crown ordered Juan Bautista de la Rigada to conduct a visita to

assess the success of the long and expensive endeavor. The visita was conducted in late 1688, and a series of interesting maps were returned with his report in January 1689, some of which called for revisions in the defenses as constructed. These maps may be divided into three groupings, the first (figures 6-3 and 6-4) indicating the defenses as they were finished in 1686; the second (figures 6-5, 6-6, and 6-7) representing one proposal for revisions; and the third (6-8, 6-9, and 6-10) presenting another proposal for revisions.

Figures 6-3 and 6-4 provide good detail of the westernmost defenses which can be seen to have been somewhat expanded from those projected in the plans drawn up in the 1670s.³³ Most significant of the changes were the constructions of two small outworks beyond the baluartes which provided additional protection for the city's main gate. Also, the area on the north side of the third baluarte--originally left unfortified--by 1686 was fully fortified. On the other side of the western wall, the first baluarte (labeled "A" on both plans) can be seen to be in a state of revision to present a better angle of fire to cover the newly constructed outworks. These plans also indicate that the seaward walls that ran the full circuit of the city were finished.

Despite the seeming adequacy of these defenses, Rigada's visita resulted in proposals for revisions. The



Figure 6-3 Panama City Fortification Projects (Source AGI/MP Panama 106)

first plan (figures 6-5, 6-6, and 6-7) calls for substantial changes in the south seawall, and in the landward³⁴ baluartes. The proposal would regularize the admittedly irregular contour of the south wall, as well as expanding the size of the city within the walls. Much of this construction would have taken place in mud flats that are awash at high tide, but dangerously exposed at low water. Rigada argued that should an enemy attack at low tide, he could do so by foot against a southern wall that, constructed to repel seaborne attacks, was much weaker than the western defenses. Moreover, the bastions at the foot of the peninsula were seen as too small and ineffective. Accordingly, the plans called for substantial expansions here too. What is not indicated on these plans, by the way, are calls for the construction of fortifications on the island of Perico, some³⁵ short distance off the coast of the city.

At the same time that he submitted the above proposals, Rigada presented an alternative plan--a much more ambitious one--that would regularize all the seaward defenses into well³⁶ balanced baluartes (figures 6-8, 6-9, and 6-10). Although this proposal was substantially different from his other plan insofar as the seawall are concerned, both shared the same recommendations for the landward defenses. Rigada must have known that this second proposal--one which incorporated the abandonment of the spit of land upon which the casas reales

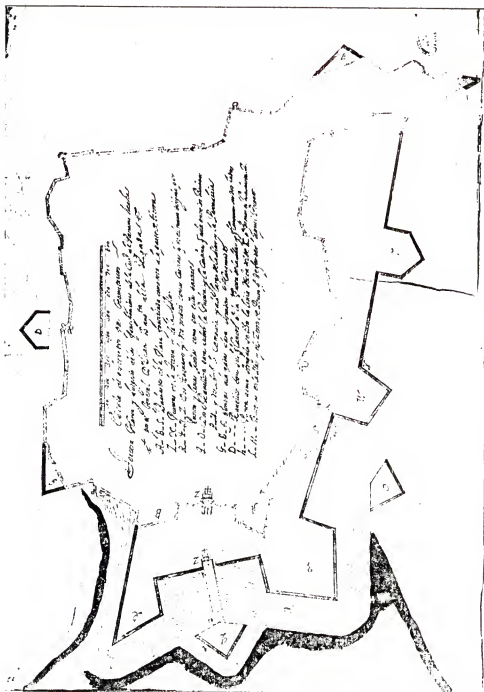


Figure 6-5 Panama City Fortification Projects (Source: AGI/NP Panama 108)

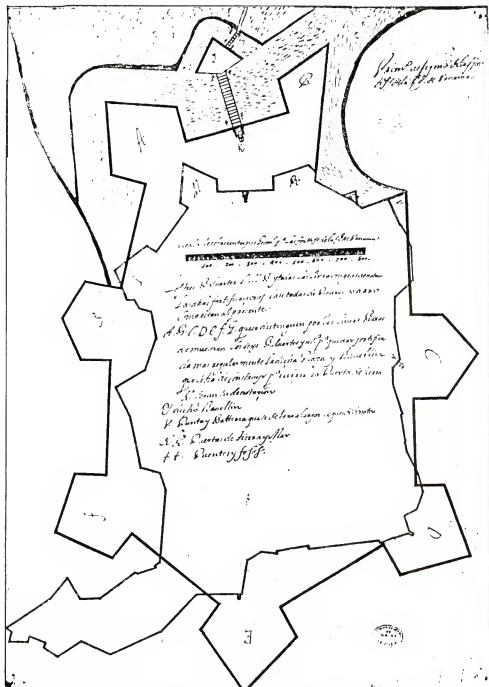


Figure 6-8 Panama City Fortifications (Source: AGI/MP Panama 103)

were constructed--would be rejected as far too expensive. After all, there were other defense projects going on at this time in Portobelo.

At any rate, neither plan was approved, the crown satisfied with the state of things as presented in figures 6-3 and 6-4. Indeed, it was in this form that the fortifications of Panama City remained for the rest of the century.

San Lorenzo and the Río Chagres

Meanwhile, as the walls of Panama City steadily rose around the collection of new buildings, other defense measures were underway at full swing. As the Morgan invasion had clearly indicated, the first line of defense for Panama City was not the walls around the capital itself, but the fortifications along the Chagres. As early as 4 August 1671 the Consejo de Indias recognized that one of the major disasters of the events of English invasion was the destruction of San Lorenzo. Accordingly, in the cédula issued on that date which called for immediate refortification of Panama City, the consejo also instructed Panamanian officials to present plans for the reconstruction of San Lorenzo.³⁷ At a junta de guerra held in Panama on 18 December 1671, however, it was decided that since the Chagres was not the only approach to Panama City, work at San Lorenzo should take second place to the construction and fortification of the new Panama. Indeed, the junta agreed

that the mouth of the Chagres required only a small fort with³⁸ a forty man garrison. This plan, however, was reversed in early 1672 by Córdoba, who, like Antonelli before him, seeing the Chagres as the only easy approach to the south coast, ordered the engineers Juan Betín and Bernardo de Ceballos y Arce to design a comprehensive defense program not only for the river mouth, but for various points along the river itself. These engineers recommended the construction of two small fortifications at Dos Brazos and Trinidad, at the confluences of the Río Chagre and Río de Dos Brazos, and the Chagre and Río Gatun respectively.³⁹ These forts, constructed in 1675 out of wood and earth, are presented in figures 6-11 and 6-12. Within a few years, however, the torrential rains that made life on the north coast so difficult, had rendered both river forts a ruined mess. Hardly maintained, they remained unusable until the eighteenth century when they were reconstructed out of more durable materials.

The new San Lorenzo, however, was another story. Designed by Ceballos y Arce, construction began in 1677, lasting off and on until the close of the decade. The design--far different from anything that had previously been built at the site, is presented in figure 6-13.⁴⁰ The castle was divided into two parts, an upper fortress and a lower platform. The lower platform consisted of two large

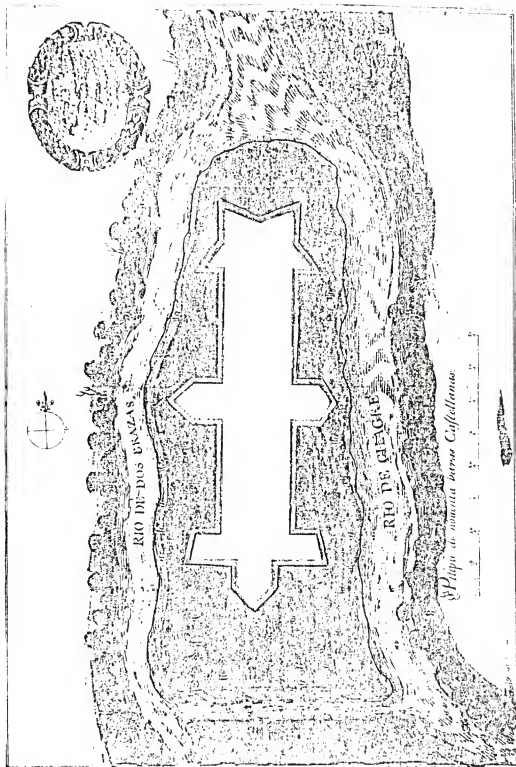


Figure 6-11 Fortifications at Dos Brazos (Source: AGI/MP Panama 85)

artillery decks, the orientation of which commanded both the entrance to the river and the portete that had so worried Cristóbal de Roda half a century before. It was within this lower battery that the main magazine was located. Connecting the lower platform to the upper castle was a long stairway. The main part of the fort occupied the whole peninsula and was protected on the landward side by two large baluartes (labeled "F" and "E"), both, like the rest of the castle walls, finished in stone. Within the walls of the upper castle were quarters for the garrison, supply rooms, and ammunitions dumps. This San Lorenzo was built to withstand naval attacks, frontal assaults, and long sieges. Needless to say, there were no thatched huts in the new structure. The construction of the Ceballos y Arce fortress effectively closed this route to Panama for the remainder of the buccaneering epoch.

Portobelo: The San Cristóbal Project

In the first years after the 1668 Morgan attack, the defenses of Portobelo remained essentially unchanged: San Gerónimo was rapidly finished and put into service, and Santiago de la Gloria and San Felipe were placed back on line when the pirates pulled out. After the Sharp attack, however, the crown began to consider major adjustments in Portobelo's defense landscape. A quick review of the position of the Portobelo forts can be had in figure 6-14, which is a

41
 depiction of the harbor as it existed in the 1670s. Santiago and San Felipe can be seen in profile, and San Gerónimo appears off the town as a small square. In the center of the east end of the harbor a four bastioned fort is indicated: this is a drawing of a postulated castle which was briefly considered as the solution to Portobelo's defense problems. The construction of such a mid-water fort, however, would contribute only to the defense of the port against a western attack--an invasion such as Sharp's would still not be checked. The only solution which would resolve the city's many defense problems was to move the city to the San Cristóbal site.

In 1679 the Sergeant-General of Tierra Firme, Don Luis de Venegas Osorio, proposed in a letter to the Consejo de Indias to move the city to the east end of the bay. In this letter Venegas was critical of the present defenses, which he considered essentially useless. The construction of a walled city on the San Cristóbal site, he argued, would allow for the abandonment of these older forts. Venegas found support for his suggestion in every corner and accordingly had little difficulty in convincing the consejo to order the move. The consejo also instructed that Santiago de la Gloria be taken
 42
 down to supply stone for the new city walls.

The initial plan, depicted in figure 6-15, was rather modest: the outer wall was pentagonal in shape (five

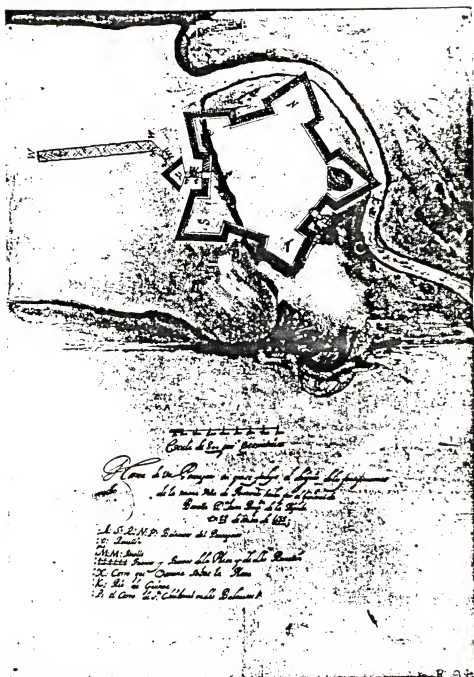


Figure 6-15 Portobelo: Pentagonal Proposal (Source: AGI/MP Panama 98)

bastions), measuring some 800 varas from one side to the other.⁴³ Two gates gave limited access from the outside, one on the landward side near the road to Panama and the other centered in the curtain between the seaward bastions. The marine gate led to an extended dock which led from the city out beyond the mud flats of the Río Cascajal.

In 1681 work was begun by clearing the construction site of the thick jungle which grew there; this activity took 50 days of "muchísimo trabajo." In October of the same year, Venegas began the digging of a moat with the labor of 100 men--70 slaves owned by the vecinos of Portobelo and 30 Indians from the surrounding countryside.⁴⁴ This work went on for three weeks, but because of errors in the original survey of the site, work had to be stopped. Instead of making progress on the city wall, however, the land was resurveyed,⁴⁵ a task which took until the end of the year.

The new assessment resulted in a revised plan (figure 6-16) drawn by Fernando de Saavedra, which, more rectangular in shape, called for a much larger area to be included within the walls.⁴⁶ The five bastions of the de Saavedra plan were San Pedro, del Rey, de la Merced de San José, San Juan de Dios, and del Duque. The new plan also provided for a longer front towards the sea, presumably in order to mount more cannon to oppose enemy warships than had been provided for in the Pentagon. This plan also called for the construction of a large dock from the city into the center of the harbor.



Figure 6-16 Portobelo: Plans for the San Cristobal Site (Source: AGI/MP Panama 95)

The de Saavedra proposal called for the landward side of the city to be cut from shore by a large moat which would utilize the Río Cascajal for most of its circuit. In January 1682 work was again begun, this time on the baluarte of San Pedro ('A'). No stone construction as of yet was undertaken--the work at San Pedro was still in the stage of piling dirt to form the core of the bastion. The roads into the new city were also begun at this early date.

At the end of 1682, because Venegas was absent from the site, work was placed under the charge of Bernardo de Ze y Auze. Venegas returned in July 1683 and personally oversaw the construction of the earthenworks on the bastion of San Juan de Dios. But the quality of construction during Venegas' absence had been so bad that in August, one month after his return, he ordered most of the work demolished. Venegas then placed work on this baluarte under the direction of the Teniente General de Portobelo, Francisco de Castro. From 1684-1686 work continued, with San Pedro by now in the stone work stage. In 1686 work was halted for about three years, as the crisis of funds caused by the Lima earthquake and the discouraging progress and plagues at Portobelo overcame all but the most enthusiastic engineers. It should be remembered also that it was in this very period that Spain reached her economic, military, and political nadir--it cannot be surprising that so little progress was made.

By 1689, however, the fiscal climate had begun to clear to the point of considering a renewal of work in Portobelo. A new Ingeniero Mayor, Juan de Ledesma, was appointed to oversee the constructions. Ledesma replaced many of the former engineers with new men: Bernardo de Ze y Auze was replaced with Juan Bautista de la Rigada, the visitador of the isthmian fortifications. Work had been stopped so long that new surveys were ordered: these resulted in figure 6-17⁴⁷ which essentially duplicates material found in figure 6-16. This plan, however, does illustrate the amount of work done during the period before work was halted. San Pedro can be seen to have been finished in stone, and San Juan de Dios--together with the two southern curtains--were done in dirt, needing only a stone facing to bring them to completion. Dating from this same period is a map of the entire harbor (figure 6-18) which shows the location of the old city, of the San Cristóbal project, and of the three older forts.⁴⁸

A review of records conducted by Ledesma revealed that the work carried out before his arrival had cost over 50,000 pesos--23,000 pesos above estimates.⁴⁹ The constructions actually finished, moreover, were for the most part useless. San Pedro, with its fifteen foot high walls, was in good condition, but the earthenworks which had not been encased in stone had been badly damaged by the elements over the course of the three year's stoppage. Ledesma, therefore, came up with new plans which were substantially different from those

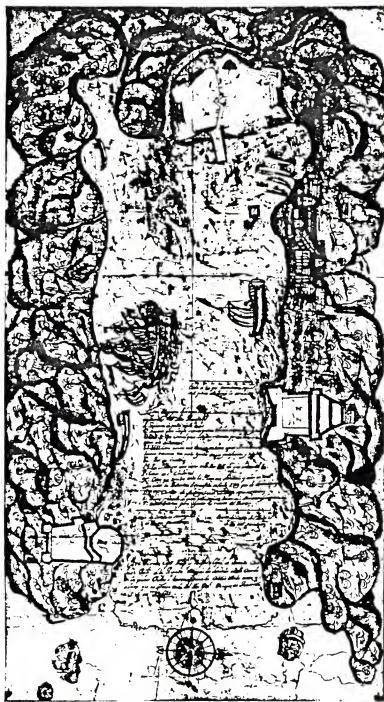


Figure 6-18 Plan of Portobelo Bay Dating to the Era of San Cristobal (Source: AGI/MP Panama 97)

of de Saavedra. The new plan, shown in figure 6-19, still further enlarged the area to be enclosed by the city walls, this time jutting the town out some 1,000 feet into the harbor.⁵⁰ All of the work accomplished before 1689 was to be abandoned. According to the plan, San Felipe was to continue as a defense structure in its old form, but Santiago de la Gloria was to be taken down to make room for an entirely new south shore fortress. The wall of the new city was to be 8,060 feet in circumference and twenty-four feet high. The estimated cost was 373,476 pesos for the fortifications, and 101,333 for a large dock for the galeones--the total cost, including other, smaller expenses was 572,656 pesos.⁵¹

Figures 6-20, 6-21, and 6-22 all represent Ledesma's new plan for the San Cristóbal site.⁵² No real work ever got underway on these proposals, and in 1692 the new President of Panama, the Marquis de la Mina, decided to order all work halted. Subsequently most of the constructions were taken down so as not to offer any cover for possible enemies attacking from the east end of the harbor.

With the abandonment of the San Cristóbal site after a decade of work, Portobelo again had to rely on her old castles for protection: the defensive scheme outlined by Antonelli a century before would continue to serve as the tactical layout of the defenses. Figure 6-23 depicts San Felipe as it existed near the end of the century.⁵³



Figure 6-22 Portobelo: San Cristobal (Source: AGI/MP Panama 113)

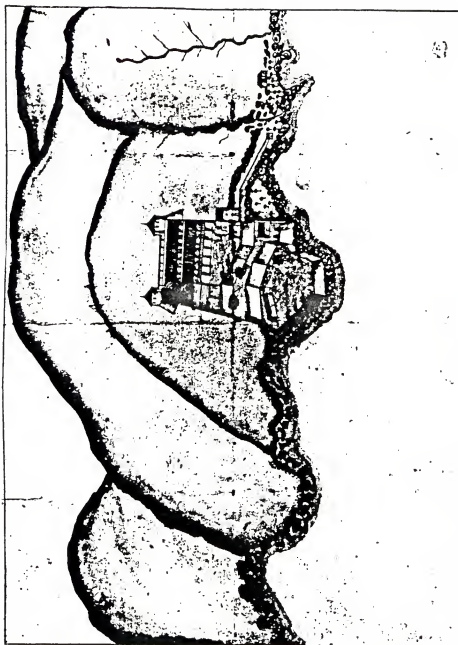


Figure 6-23 Castillo San Felipe (Source: AGI/MP Panama 93)

Portobelo would face one more brief crisis during the era of the Hapsburgs. This occurred in 1702, when, during the War of Spanish Succession, an English fleet engaged San Felipe in a short, ineffective artillery duel. As the seventeenth century closed, however, Portobelo's greatest test was still 50 years away.

The Scottish Empire in America

In 1695, far, far away from the sweltering jungles of Panama, one of the strangest events in the history of the isthmus was unfolding. In the Scottish city of Edinburgh, one of the founders of the Bank of England, William Paterson, undertook the first actions that, he hoped, would eventually lead to an English-Scottish colony in the Darién--a colony that would serve as a northern European Portobelo, where thousands of ships of various nations could trade each year. The scheme hardly seemed far fetched at the time, and as he made his proposal public, thousands of investors eagerly awaited the
54
promulgation of the new company's capital bond issue.

The subscription was opened in November in London, and within a short time all of the 300,000 pounds requested was at hand. Although the first capital had been raised in England, the company intended to raise additional funds in Scotland--there was no mistaking the project as a Scottish venture, conceived in part to compete with English joint stock companies then operating in North America. Because of

Scottish involvement, and despite English enthusiasm demonstrated through the quick take on the subscription, many London merchants moved quickly to have the crown revoke the bond issue as contrary to the interests of the English nation. King William offered little resistance, and in January, 1696, the subscription was declared void. Not willing to be so quickly defeated, Paterson and the company board of directors retired to Edinburgh and issued a new subscription in Scotland, a move which raised the astonishing sum of 400,000 pounds in five months. This amount of money was a fantastic amount given the general poverty of the Scottish countryside of the late seventeenth century, and indeed the recoinage of 1707-1708 showed 400,000 pounds to be⁵⁵ near the equivalent of the entire coinage in Scotland.

Thus equipped with ample capital reserves, Paterson began preparations for a colonizing expedition to Panama on behalf of the Company of Scotland. His travels took him to Amsterdam and Germany, and despite a minor financial scandal, by November a fleet of five ships was gathered in Leith, 1,200 hopeful colonists ready to set sail for the New World. In these ships were contained not only the hope of the Scottish people for an overseas empire, but also tons of Scotland's products taken for trading on the isthmus. Included were an array of knives, candlesticks, locks, thousands of bolts of heavy Scotch wool, 79 dozen Aberdeen stockings, 1,440 bonnets, 1,500 bibles, 23,000 clay pipes,

4,000 periwigs and other things hardly suited for trading in
 56
 the tropics.

In July, 1698, the fleet left Leith, landing four months later at Caledonia in the Darién. After a few days of scouting around, on November 3 the colonists took possession of the deserted harbor. A description of Caledonia and a narrative of the day's events are preserved in the log of a Mr. Rose, one of the original settlers:

The harbour is within a great bay lying to the westward of it, made by Golden Island and a point of land bearing from thence east about a league. From that eastmost point to the opposite one, is a random cannon shot, and in the middle of the entry lies a rock about 3 foot above the water, on which the Sea beats furiously, when the wind is out and blows hard. This looks terrible to those who know not the place well, but in both sides of this rock is a very good and wide channel. . . . The harbour runs away east a good league, and near the middle on the right hand the land sets out, so that it is not a musquet shot over, and thus far there is not less than 6 fathom water with very good easy ground, and here you ride landlocked every way that no wind can possibly hurt you. Within this to the bottom of the harbour, till within a cables length of the shore we have not less than 3 fathom water, nor can a hurricane make the least sea there. The land on the left hand coming in is a peninsula, and about 3 miles long, very high and steep towards the sea, where it will be extremely difficult for any body to land till ye come to the Ithmus, where is a small sandy bay. Small ships may ride but this by a good ditch and fort may safely be secured. The westernmost point towards the harbour is low and very fit for a battery to command the entry, which would be excellently secured by another on the opposite shore. The land on the Peninsula is extraordinary good, and full of stately trees

fit for all uses, and full of pleasant birds, as is also the opposit shore, and hath several small springs which we hope will hold in the dryest season. But on the other side there are 4 or 5 fine rivers that never do dry. This harbour is capable of containing 1,000 of the best ships in the world, and with no great trouble wharfs may be run out to ships of the greatest burthen may lay their sides and unload. .57. . This day we landed and took possession.

Little did Rose know, he did not have to worry about his springs running dry. Indeed, before the month was over, Panama's rains had begun. He wrote in his log of the storms:

November 24. Much wind and rain.

November 25. Wind and rain as above.

November 27. Very much rain and wind.

November 28. These 24 hourse there has fallen
a prodigious quantity of rain.

November 29. Much rain with fresh gales.

December 1. Much thunder, lightning, and
rain.

December 2. The weather continues very bad
which hinders the work much.

December 3. Great showers and much rain.

58

And so the log continues, day after day. Despite the rains, by the end of December a small fort had been constructed, as had a number of houses, collectively called New Edinburgh. A crude map of the area settled is presented
59
in figure 6-24. The fort can be seen situated on the peninsula at the center of the map, both ends being labled

baluartes. On the point of the peninsula stood the circular platform that held most of the structure's artillery. When the Spanish took Castle St. Andrew in 1700, they found it was "built of a double row of wooden stakes with earth packed between rows; and around the said fortification . . . opened a moat five varas wide and three varas deep."⁶⁰ A better map, dating to 1761, more accurately depicts the bay, though detail is scant. Fort St. Andrew was located at the point labled "A" on figure 6-25.⁶¹ The fort held 12 sixteen pound cannon, hardly enough to defend the new colony against a Spanish effort to dislodge them. Accordingly, the Scots undertook a diplomatic effort aimed at convincing the Panamanian authorities that theirs was a peaceful mission aimed only at expanding trade.⁶² The Spanish were not convinced. In February, 1699, the Barlovento Squadron entered Portobelo and preparations were immediately underway for an attack. This force, however, was deemed too unseaworthy to undertake the reduction of New Edinburgh, and the president of Panama, the Conde de Canillas, decided to launch a land attack.⁶³ Meanwhile, the Consejo de Indias in Spain was meeting to discuss the situation, fearing,

If the Scots procure a footing and fortify themselves in the island (which they may be presumed to have done), situated so close to the Main, inasmuch as it may be justifiably feared from the unreliable character and natural perversity of the Darien Indians that they will assist the Scots in their purpose, they can readily spread thence and occupy that territory, since it is contiguous. From this

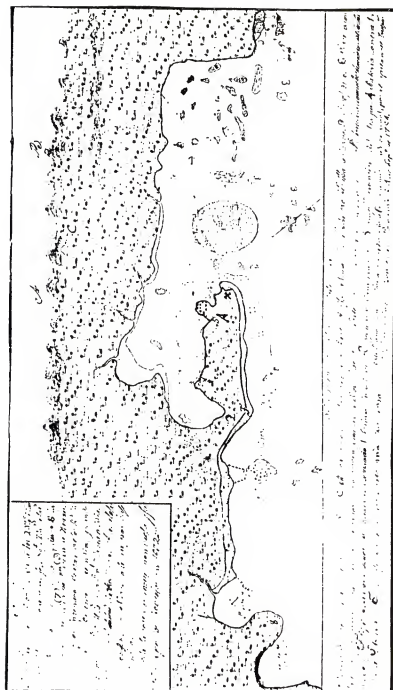


Figure 6-25 New Caledonia at time of Spanish Attack (Source: CU No. 91)

would ensue irreparable damage--even graver than that experienced in regions which other nations have occupied.⁶⁴

At any rate, in February 1699 the Spanish launched their land invasion, but within a few weeks rains forced them to abandon their efforts. They set up a fortified base camp between Caledonia and Portobelo at a place called ⁶⁵ Toubucanti. Just after the Spanish ended their first half-hearted expedition against the Scots, a new shipload of colonists--300 strong--arrived to reinforce the settlement. This came just as the death toll from the isthmian climate was reaching astounding proportions. Fevers and sickness wracked the bodies of hundreds of Scotsmen, while still hundreds more had already been committed to Darién's damp soil. With the reinforcements, however, came disastrous news: the English government had repudiated the company's activities, and rather than offering support for the Scottish colonial venture, the parliament announced its intention to ⁶⁶ hinder it any way possible. With this rug yanked out from under their feet, and with death and sickness in their midst, the colonists decided to abandon New Edinburgh in June.

Before news of the abandonment reached Scotland, however, a new expedition consisting of three ships with another 1,300 colonists set sail (leaving on September 23). They arrived at deserted Caledonia at the end of November. Hardly equipped to revitalize the colony, a council met and

decided to send 500 of the colonists to Jamaica, while the remaining 700 or so awaited further word from Scotland. Even as morale sank still lower, on February 11 a new, energetic leader named Alexander Campbell of Fonab arrived on a dispatch boat. Within days he set about creating order out of the prevailing confusion--and just in time. It was against this backdrop that Panamanian authorities launched their full-scale effort to dislodge the invaders.

The Spanish response to the Scots' settlement was vigorous, appropriate, and effective, though it took resources from as far away as New Spain to bring the effort to fruition.⁶⁷ By the time Fonab arrived in New Edinburgh, the colonists were plainly aware that a large force was gathering in Portobelo for the purpose of ending the puritan infestation. Fonab, therefore, decided to launch a preemptive strike against the Spanish outpost at Toubucanti. Leading a small band of soldiers, Fonab achieved a complete surprise against the handful of defenders inside the palisade and the place fell on February 15. But the euphoria of victory did not last long: when Fonab returned to the colony (February 23) it was just in time to witness the arrival of the Spanish fleet from Portobelo.⁶⁸

Under the command of the Conde de Canillas, the Spanish forces were somewhat hesitant to move quickly against Fort St. Andrew, not knowing what resources the Scots had available for their defense. Accordingly, for the first few

weeks of what became an extended siege, efforts were made to capture prisoners so as to gain needed information. By March 1 it was known that Fort St. Andrew was manned by some 700 men--only 400 of which were well enough to fight--and had been strengthened to 31 cannon (8 at 24 pounds, 23 at 18 and 8 pounds). Additionally, 15 small calibre brass guns were positioned on the landward bastions. In the harbor, the largest Scottish ship had some 62 guns, while the 3 smaller boats had between 10 and 12 each. As for supplies, some seven months worth had been stored in anticipation of the Spanish arrival.⁶⁹ This was a formidable force, especially considering the Spanish had only 700 troops to throw against them. Moreover, the substantial artillery potential of the fort and the ships made any naval assault out of the question. No one understood this more than Juan de Herrera Sotomayor, one of the expedition leaders and Ingeniero Mayor of the Cartagena fortifications.⁷⁰ This information strengthened the Spanish resolve to conduct the campaign as a seige.

There was little the Scots could do as the Spanish forces began landing (see figure 6-26--the landing area is marked "X", the position of the Spanish ships "E").⁷¹ Accordingly, 300 troops were landed with no opposition from Fonab's soldiers. Some minor skirmishing occurred over the next two weeks, each day seeing the Spanish forces moving

closer to the fort. Even after a month's time in Caledonia, Canillas was reluctant to launch a frontal assault, although his supplies were running low and the diseases that had decimated the colonists in New Edinburgh were beginning to appear in his own ranks. In an effort to try to bring the matter to a close, he offered Fonab terms on March 3. Not fully cognizant of the terms because they had no translator, the Scots refused. On March 15 Canillas decided to send some of his ships to Cartagena for additional supplies and forces, resolving to launch a direct attack as soon as these had arrived.

The situation in the fort was deteriorating rapidly as in the close, cramped quarters sickness quickly spread. Even so, the settlers held out for the entire month of March, but when a second offer of terms from the Spanish arrived guaranteeing free passage from the isthmus, there was little debate as what course to take. On March 31 Fort St. Andrew⁷² capitulated. The evacuation was complete by April 22, and⁷³ both Scots and Spaniards left, glad to be gone.

The Scottish effort to settle the Darién was an ambitious, nationalist effort that, if it had been successful, would have represented a far greater threat to Spanish Panama than all of the buccaneers combined. And, although the Spanish did drive the colonists away, their efforts surely would have failed it the Company of Scotland had had financial and military support from the English

crown. Indeed, it was English condemnation of the colony, as much as Spanish determination to destroy the settlement, that led to New Edinburgh's demise. It was not until 40 years later that England realized that a golden opportunity had been lost. But by then it was too late.

The End of the Century; the End of an Era

The close of the seventeenth century was a period of change for Panama: the mercantile monopoly upon which the isthmus so heavily depended and which had been in serious decline since mid-century was now in its death agonies. Fairs were occurring every five to six years instead of every year, or every other year, as in the first half of the century. Officials in Portobelo and Panama City, however, held high hopes for the new century: Spain now had a new dynasty in the Bourbons, and the prospects for lasting peace had never before been better. The pirate threat was essentially gone, a thing of the past, and the Scottish invasion had been soundly driven off. These successes, Panamanians thought, would make life much easier. They did not yet know that it was the end of the century and the end of an era.

Notes

1

An excellent discussion of the military initiatives in the Hapsburg New World Empire during this era is Harold Guy Bensusan's doctoral dissertation, "The Spanish Struggle Against Foreign Encroachment in the Caribbean," University of California at Los Angeles, 1970.

2

Alexander Esquemeling, The Buccaneers of America, chapter 12, which is an addendum to Esquemeling's original edition, "A brief account of Captain Sharp and others his companions; their voyage from Jamaica unto the province of Darien and the South Sea," p. 258. Also see Anderson, Old Panama, pp. 439-445.

3

L. E. Elliott Joyce, preface to Lionel Wafer, A New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America (London, 1967).

4

Sharp, p. 258; Cabildo of Portobelo to the crown, 28 April 1680, AGI Panamá 83.

5

The figure of 80 pirates differs from Sharp's claim of 200. Elliott Joyce, "Introduction." Also see ANP, "Carta al rey de don Luis Osorio de Rigado de Portobelo, solicitando que lo trasladen a otro sitio, y dando informes sobre las obras llevadas a cabo," in Susto Documents, vol. xv, document 269. Also see George Sycherly, Buccaneers of the Pacific (Indianapolis, 1928) and Peter Gerhard, Pirates on the West Coast of New Spain, 1575-1742. In the aftermath of the Sharp-Coxon invasion, Portobelo sent pleas of poverty to the crown, hoping for (and, in 1681, receiving) tax breaks to offset the depredations and damage caused by the English (Cabildo of Portobelo to the crown, 1 August 1680, AGI Panamá 88).

6

Guillermo Céspedes del Castillo, "La defensa militar del Istmo de Panamá a fines del siglo XVII y comienzos del XVIII," Anuario de estudios americanos 9 (1952) pp. 235-275.

7

The San Lorenzo noted here is not the fort on the Caribbean coast, but a settlement in Veragua. Additional data on these attacks can be found in Ibid. p. 243; "Resumen que se ha formado por la secretaría del Perú de las operaciones de los piratas," Madrid, 25 October 1686, AGI Panamá 96; "Relación de las operaciones de los piratas que infestan el Mar del Sur sacada de las cartas que el presidente de Panamá," AGI Panamá 96; "Carta de Don Francisco de Castro sobre los piratas que pretendían hacer su entrada por el Río Mandinga para salir al pueblo de Chepo: declaraciones de un prisionero francés," 27 February 1685, ANP Susto Documents, vol. xv, document 297. Also note material in Anderson, Old Panama, pp. 439-470, and, more briefly, in Gerstle Mack, The Land Divided: A History of the Panama Canal and Other Isthmian Canal Projects (New York, 1944), pp. 77-83. Zapatero, San Lorenzo, makes some mention of an Englishman named Edward Davis who was active in the Pacific with 10 ships in 1685 (p. 134).

8

Bensusan, p. 75.

9

Ibid. p. 50. Bensusan divides French-Spanish relations into three principal periods during the last decades of the seventeenth century. The first period he calls the "Intimidation Stage" which lasted from the end of the Third Dutch War in 1678 until the death of Colbert in 1683. This period was followed by the "Direct Force Stage" from 1683 to 1689. The period 1689-1697 he calls the "Open Warfare Stage." Also see John B. Wolf, Louis XIV (New York, 1968), p. 246, and N. M. Crouse, The French Struggle for the West Indies, 1665-1713 (New York, 1943).

10

Bensusan, pp. 51-52.

11

Ibid., p. 52; Wolf, Louis XIV, pp. 213-269. Newton, The European Nations in the West Indies, pp. 296-307.

12

Bensusan, p. 61. As in the case of the French, Bensusan has divided English policy vis-a-vis Spain into three periods. These are: 1) period of ambivalence, 1676-1681; 2) period of expanded trade with Spanish Empire, 1681-1689; 3)

wartime alliance with Spain against France, 1689-1697. Again, see Newton, The European Nations in the West Indies, last chapters.

13

Bensusan, p. 79.

14

Bensusan, (p. vi) in his efforts to gather information from all areas of the Caribbean, was unable to look at any one place in great detail--this has led to several factual errors on his part. For example, he reviewed the numerous maps and plans which relate to Portobelo's San Cristóbal site and mistakenly concluded that the city walls indicated on those plans had been constructed when in fact they were only planned.

15

Céspedes del Castillo, "La defensa" p. 255; G. Lohman Villena, El Conde de Lemos, virrey del Perú (Madrid, 1946), p. 336.

16

"Memorial de Silverstre Fernández de Breñas al Rey," 10 April 1686, AGI Panamá 96; Cédula of 4 October 1685, AGI Panamá 96; "Consulta del consejo," 29 September, 1685 AGI Panamá 94; "Expedientes sobre actuación y apresto de estas cinco fragatas," AGI Panamá 83; also see Céspedes del Castillo, "La defensa" pp. 247-253.

17

Bensusan, p. 155.

18

Ibid., pp. 91-92.

19

Ibid., pp. 17, 89, 152.

20

Céspedes del Castillo, p. 255; also see Ernesto de Jesús Castillo Reyes, Grandeza y decadencia del castillo de San Lorenzo.

21

ANP Susto Documents, "Expediente relacionado con los gastos invertidos en la defensa del Istmo, 1672-1700." vol. xv, document 287. Also see Céspedes del Castillo, "La defensa" pp. 262-263, and "informe de la contaduría del consejo," 5 February 1687, AGI Panamá 88. Some financing was gained by

forced donations from Panama's vecinos (Mercado Villacorta to the crown, 31 July 1677, AGI Panamá 88. Panama's being the receptor of situado payments was a reversal of the isthmus' sixteenth-century role when it helped finance lesser areas of the empire. See Engel Sluiter, The Florida Situado: Quantifying the First Eighty Years, 1571-1651 (Gainesville, 1985), end flap.

22

Céspedes del Castillo, "La defensa" p. 263.

23

Mudanza, traslado y reconstrucción de la ciudad de Panamá en 1673, p. 19.

24

Ibid., p. 18. Morgan's attack on Panama also spurred the construction of fortifications in Peru, not the least of which was a 31 baluarte wall around Lima which was finished in 1688. See AGI Mapas y Planos, Perú 12 and 13. Some discussion of these fortifications is available in Céspedes del Castillo, "La defensa," pp. 260-261.

25

Marichalar to the crown, 1671, as quoted in Mudanza, traslado, p. 20.

26

Roland Hussey, "Spanish Colonial Trails," p. 57.

27

Some information on the actual move is available in Samuel A. Gutiérrez, Arquitectura Panameña (Panama, 1966), p. 101. "Plano de la ciudad de Panamá segun ha de quedar en el sitio donde se está mundano," 1673, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 84.

28

"Planta de la ciudad y fortificaciones de la nueva Panamá hecha año de 1675," AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 87.

29

President Alonso de Mercado to the crown, 12 July 1675, AGI Panamá 25; Juan Bautista Sosa, La ciudad de Panamá en 1675 (Panama, 1947).

30

Pontefranca to the crown, 17 April 1686, AGI Panamá 96; "Expediente relacionado con gastos invertidos en la defensa del istmo, 1672-1700," ANP Susto Documents, vol. xv, document 287.

31

"Memorial de Gaspar de Aybar al Rey," 14 December 1677, AGI Panamá 88; "Informe del presidente de la Audiencia de Panamá Don Alonso de Mercado, sobre fortificaciones," 1681, ANP Susto Documents, vol. xv, document 295; "Relación sobre las obras de fortificación hechas en Panamá, Portobelo, y Río de Chagre, año 1680," Servicio Historico Militar, Recopilacion Aparici, sgn. 6.701; 2-3-2-4.

32

"Expediente relacionado con los gastos invertidos en la defensa del istmo, 1672-1700," ANP Susto Documents, vol. xv, document 287; Zapatero, "La Plaza fortificada de Panamá," pp. 233-235.

33

"Segunda planta de las fortificaciones de la ciudad de Panamá hecha por el general don Juan Bautista de la Rigada," 1689, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 106; "Segundo designio de las fortificaciones de la ciudad de Panamá por Juan Bautista de la Rigada," AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 107.

34

"Tercer planta y designio de las fortificaciones de la ciudad de Panamá hecha por el General don Juan Bautista de la Rigada, 1689 AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 108; "Planta del tercio designio de las fortificaciones de la ciudad de Panamá por Juan Bautista de la Rigada," 1689, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 109; "Cuarto designio para fortificar la ciudad de Panamá dexando sus fortificaciones como estan al presente," 1698, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 110.

35

The fortification of Perico, which was originally indicated on the maps and plans above, have been omitted because the AGI photographer was unable to get them, with the city, all on one frame. Let it suffice to say that no fortifications were erected on the island during the 1680s.

36

"Planta de la fortificaciones de Panamá que remite el yngeniero mayor D. Juan de Ledesma," 1689, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 103; "Primero designio de las fortificaciones de la ciudad de Panamá," AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 105; "Primera planta de las fortificaciones de la ciudad de Panamá, segun el nuevo designio por lineas roxas hecha por el General d. Juan Bautista de la Rigada, 6 enero 1698," AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 104.

37

ANP Cédula of 4 August 1671.

38

Junta de Guerra in Panama, as quoted in Mudanza, p. 23.

39

"Planta de la fortificación de Dos Brazas que esta 3 leg.s del Gatun, y 6 del Castillo de Chagre. Hecho para defensa del Río, año de 1675," AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 85; "Planta de la fortificación del Gatun que esta 3 lenguas del Castillo de Chagre, para defensa del Río, hecha año de 1675," AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 86. Also, documents of the Junta de Guerra, 1672, Servicio Histórico Militar, Recopilación Aparici, sgn. 6.701; 2-3-2-4. These forts are briefly discussed in Zapatero, San Lorenzo, pp. 129-131.

40

"Planta del Castillo de chagre hecha por el General Don Juan Bacp.ta de la Rigada," 1689, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 116; "expediente relacionado con los gastos invertidos en la defensa del istmo, 1672-1700," ANP Susto Documents, vol. xv, document 278; and general discussion of new fortifications at San Lorenzo in Mercado Villacorte to the crown, 11 April 1677, AGI Panamá 88; and Juan de Ledesma to the crown, 6 January 1689, AGI Panamá 168. Also, useful information on decisions taken in 1678 regarding the construction of the fortress is contained in "Relación sobre las obras de fortificación hechas en Panamá, Portobelo, y Río de Chagre, año 1680," Servicio Histórico Militar, Recopilación Aparici, sgn. 6.701; 2-3-2-4.

41

"Planta del puerto de Portobelo con sus distancias y paraxe donde se ha de fabricar la fuerza nueva." AGI Mapas y Planos Panamá 94.

42

Castillero Calvo, "Portobelo", pp. 150-157.

43

"Planta de un Pentagono en que se yncluye el designio de las fortificaciones de la nueva villa de Portobelo hecha por el General de Batalla Don Juan Bautista de la Rigada, en 22 de Octubre de 1688" AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 98; "Relación sobre las obras de fortificación hechas en Panamá, Portobelo, y Río de Chagre, año 1680," Servicio Histórico Militar, Recopilación Aparici, sgn. 6.701; 2-3-2-4.

44

Castillero Calvo, pp. 150-151. Also ANP Susto Documents, "Carta al Rey de Don Luis Osorio de Rigado de Portobelo..." vol. xv, document 269.

45

Susto Documents, Ibid.

46

"Planta de la nueva ciudad de Puertovelo que se esta executando hecha en 3 Julio de 1683." AGI, Mapas y Planos Panamá 95.

47

"Planta de la fortificacion de Portobelo que remite el yngeniero mayor D. Juan de Ledesma, con carta para su magestade de 6 de Enero de 1689." AGI Mapas y Planos Panamá 114.

48

"Planta del designio de la nueva villa de Portobelo hecha por el general de Batalla, D. Luis Benegas." AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 97.

49

Castillero Calvo, p. 153; "Expediente relacionado con los gastos invertidos en la defensa del Istmo, 1672-1700," ANP Susto Documents, vol. xv, document 287.

50

"Planta de las fortificaciones de la nueva ciudad de Portovelo que por lineas y puntos negros, demuestra el designio del General D. Luis Venegas y por las roxas el del General D. Juan Bautista del la Rigada, reglada por una misma escala." AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 111.

51

Castillero Calvo, "Portobelo" p. 154; "Expediente relacionado con los gastos invertidos en la defensa del Istmo, 1672-1700," ANP Susto Documents, vol. xv, document 287.

52

"Planta de un exagonal en que se incluye el designio de las fortificaciones de la nueva villa de Portovelo hecha por el General de Vataalla D. Juan Bautista de la Rigada, en 22 de Octubre de 1688." AGI Mapas y Planos Panamá 99; "Primero designio para fortifacar la nueva ciudad de Portovelo." AGI Mapas y Planos Panamá 112; "Secundo designio de la nueva ciudad de Portovelo." AGI, Mapas y Planos Panamá 113.

53

"Planta de San Felipe de Todo Fierro." AGI, Mapas y Planos Panamá 93.

54

There is an extensive bibliography of the Scottish efforts in Darien, not the least of which is John Prebble, The Darien Disaster: A Scots Colony in the New World, 1698-1700 (New York, 1968). Also very valuable is James Samuel Barbour, A History of William Paterson and the Darien Company (Edinburgh, 1907) and Francis Russel Hart, The Disaster of Darien (Boston, 1929) which is based on Spanish documents in the AGI. The documentation on the Scottish side is housed in the National Library of Scotland, a large selection of which has been published in two volumes: John Hill Burton, ed., The Darien Papers: Being a Selection of Original Letters and Official Documents Relating to the Establishment of a Colony at Darien by the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies, 1695-1700 (Edinburgh, 1849) and George Pratt Insh, Darien Shipping Papers Relating to the Ships and Voyages of the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies, 1696-1707 (Edinburgh, 1924). Insh also wrote a history of the company entitled, The Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies (London, 1932). Very brief treatment--though inclusive of all the major events--is David Howarth, Panama: Four Hundred Years of Dreams and Cruelty (New York, 1966) pp. 108-153. Mack (The Land Divided) and Anderson (Old Panama) also have chapters detailing the Caledonia venture.

55

J. D. Mackie, A History of Scotland (New York, 1978), p. 255. For a general treatment of Scottish history during the years of the Darien scheme, see Daniel Defoe, The History of the Union Between England and Scotland (London, 1786) which has the advantage of being both detailed and written in grand style; and T. C. Smout, Scottish Trade on the Eve of the Union, 1660-1707 (Edinburgh, 1963).

56

Howarth, p. 115.

57

"Mr. Rose's Journal," as republished in Hart, Disaster of Darien, pp. 197-199.

58

Ibid., pp. 208-210. Many other settlers dwelt on the rains and sickness that resulted in their letters. See various papers in Burton, The Darien Papers and Insh, The Company of Scotland, chapter 1 ("The first expedition") pp. 109-160.

59

"Fortification esconces en la Caledonia," AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 149. There is some confusion as to the date of the map, Pedro Torrez Lanzas putting it at 1758, though

because of the style of the map and for paleographic reasons I think it dates to near 1700. At any rate, the depiction of the bay is very crude and inaccurate.

60

Conde de Canillas to the crown, 15 January 1700, AGI Panamá 164.

61

"Plano particular de la Bahía de Calydonia, " 1761, map no. 92 in Servicios geográficos y históricos del ejército, Cartografía de ultramar: Carpeta IV, América Central (Madrid, 1957).

62

See anonymous letter from Caledonia, 18 February 1698 in Hart, Disaster of Darien, p. 238.

63

Conde de Canillas to the crown, 6 May 1699, AGI Panamá 162; Andrés de Paz to the crown, 10 June 1699, AGI Panamá 160. A useful summary of Spanish activities before summer, 1699 is in a memorial dated 30 October 1699, AGI Panamá 161.

64

The reference to an "island" stems from ignorance in Spain as to the actual location of the settlement. Text of Council of the Indies meeting of 12 February, 1699 in Hart, Disaster of Darien, pp. 251-255, (252). The problem of ridding the Scots from Darien was complicated by simultaneous French moves on West Florida, where, for a while, it seemed possible that Pensacola might be lost. Resources allocated to the defense of that city eventually were redirected against the Scots, who were seen as the more serious of the threats.

65

Various letters (of Canillas to the crown), February 1699, AGI Panamá 162.

66

Jamaica's governor, for instance, communicated to the president of Cartagena that the English government had no knowledge of Scottish activities in the region, claiming that the relationship between England and Scotland was like that of Castile and Aragon. See Hart, Disaster of Darien, p. 291; Howarth details anti-Scottish measures taken by the English crown (such as communicating to New York and the Atlantic seaboard that they should not trade with New Edinburgh) on pp. 126-127.

67

Viceroy Sarmiento to General Zavala (Mexico City) 20 July 1699, as quoted in Hart, Disaster of Darien, pp. 310-313. These troops had been preparing to embark for Pensacola.

68

The details of the final campaign are set forth in the diary of Don Juan Pimienta for the months of February through April, 1700 AGI Panamá 164; also see ANP Susto Documents, "Informe rendido por el Conde de Canillas desde Portobelo sobre los gastos que constan en los libros reales, hechos en la defensa contra el enemigo los escoceses en el Darien," 1700, vol. xvi, document 320; and ANP Susto Documents, "Los tenientes oficiales de la Real Hacienda de Portobelo informan al Rey sobre las providencias que se dieron por el logro de desvelación de los escoceses," 1700, vol. xvii, document 322.

69

Diego de Peredo to the Conde de Canillas, 28 March 1700, AGI Panamá 164. This information is confirmed by another source, which, however, adds that the Scots had 3 fireships, but only 2 months of supplies (Manuel de Toca y Velasco to the Conde de Canillas, 26 March 1700, AGI Panamá 164).

70

Diary of Juan Pimienta, AGI Panamá 164.

71

"Plano del puerto de Calidonia," 1700, map no. 91 in Cartografía de ultramar.

72

The articles of capitulation also included a clause stating that the Spanish would not take any retaliatory action against the region's Indians (many of whom had assisted the Scots in their colonizing activities). This document is presented in Hart, Disaster of Darien, pp. 248-250.

73

The forced removal of the colonists did not dissuade further attempts in Scotland to revitalize the Darien project. In October, 1700, the Company's board of directors petitioned the Scottish parliament for official support, though because of strong English opposition (especially from the King), this was refused. No further efforts were made to colonize Panama, and the company was dissolved in 1707 as part of the Union of the crowns. By provisions in the act, England paid off the Scottish investors, so that unlike Law's subscribers in Paris, numerous bankruptcies were avoided.

PANAMA AND THE NEW CENTURY: 1702-1819

The first years of the eighteenth century were a period of fundamental change in the Hispanic World Empire. The advent of the Bourbons as the ruling dynasty in Spain resulted in a basic reorientation of Spanish foreign policy and a restructuring of the balance of power in Europe that had been fixed in form since the days of the Reformation. Internal imperial policies, while at first unaltered, by the end of the eighteenth century were very different from those bequeathed by the last pitiful Hapsburg. Although the second half of the century was a period of administrative adjustment for the Spanish Empire, the first half was the era when the need for change was made embarrassingly apparent. The period 1702-1744 was a very bad one for Panama in both a military and an economic sense. Just as Spain had reached her nadir in the 1680s, Panama and Portobelo hit rock bottom¹ in the first years of the Bourbon era.

Of primary importance among the various facets of empire was, as in the days of the Hapsburgs, the *carrera de Indias*.

Philip V attempted to continue seventeenth-century policies because the maintenance of the mercantile monopoly was essential to bolster the new government in Spain. In decline for at least half a century, by 1700 the old imperial economic order with its inefficient and chaotic system of flotas and fairs was being driven below the waves as continued assaults from smuggling, administrative corruption, European conflict, and a host of other less significant destructive trends made the profitable functioning of the old machine impossible. Because Panama was ultimately tied to the carrera--indeed because Portobelo was one of the principal cogs in the machinery of the imperial economy--any decline in that economy made itself profoundly felt on the Isthmus. As discussed above in chapter 2, Panama was bypassed as an economic center long before the Bourbon trade reforms of the last part of the eighteenth century.

While legal trade between Spain and Peru by way of Panama declined to the point of near extinction by 1731, in addition to growing illicit commerce, royal silver shipments continued to use the old routes. Silver returns, although in decline since the first decades of the seventeenth century (and in serious decline after 1640), were still of vital importance to the Spanish government in Europe, and although the expensive complications in northern and central Europe that were always a large drain on the Hapsburg budget were shed with the coronation of Philip V and the beginning of the

family compact, there was still little opportunity to save money. Spain, now an ally of France, was involved in every major conflict until the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. For fighting these wars, and for the financing of Bourbon attempts to build a sound economy in Spain, the crown needed every ounce of silver it could get from the New World mines. Because Panama was still of vital importance to the continued flow of silver from Peru, Spain maintained and even expanded the region's fortifications.

The Panamanian Fortifications in the Early Eighteenth Century

That the glory of the isthmus had passed was not recognized by Spain's enemies. Throughout the early eighteenth century, large military efforts were directed against Tierra Firme--especially against Portobelo--in the belief that it was still one of the Spanish Empire's most important imperial zones, a premise which was simply no longer correct.

During the period 1702-1739 two important revisions in the defenses at Portobelo were undertaken. First was the construction of a small trinchera on the south shore of the harbor directly opposite San Felipe. Named the Fuerte Farnesio, this little structure was nothing more than an earthenwork constructed in 1726 to hold four cannon. Recommendations for the construction of such a south shore battery surfaced as early as the era of the construction of Santiago de la Gloria, and in 1623 Juan López de Cañizares

too advised that some defense work be built on this site. These recommendations were repeated in the 1680s by Venegas Osorio and de la Rigada during the period of activity at the San Cristóbal site.²

The catalyst which brought about the actual construction of the trinchera was British Admiral Hosier's blockade of Portobelo during the 1726 fair. Admiral Hosier's fleet of 11 warships moored in the Bastimientos, or the harbor on the southwest side of Portobelo bay, an anchorage well beyond the range of San Felipe's guns. He stayed off Portobelo for much of 1726, effectively influencing the fair, at times disrupting commerce. Hosier, ostensibly, was not on a military mission to Portobelo, and indeed no fighting was recorded during his stay, but the presence of an English fleet at the fair site was, at the very least, uncomfortable for Spanish authorities.³ In the last weeks of his stay, Hosier implemented a full scale blockade. It was only ended after so many of his men became sick that he no longer could maintain station off the port.

If the Spanish had had a small fortification on the Ranchería point opposite San Felipe, they would have been able to deny Hosier command of Bastimientos. Resolution to construct a fort at the site was strong in the aftermath of the Hosier blockade, but the small earthen trenches that were dug were soon abandoned, the memory of the 1726 fair

forgotten only months after the flota left. The site was
⁴
 abandoned.

In 1731 Juan de Herrera Sotomayor, the ingeniero director del ejército, wanted to build a two-part (lower battery and upper tower) fortress at the Farnesio location that would hold 30 cannon; as was so often the case, nothing ever came of the plan. His proposal is presented in figures
⁵
 7-1 and 7-2.

With the growth of international tension in the late 1730's Farnesio was reactivated as a sort of "reserve" defensive site. In 1740 Admiral Vernon made a personal inspection of the Farnesio area and described it to his superior in the Admiralty, Charles Wager, with these words:

The President of Panama's letter making mention of the place called Fort Farnese, as a well-judged situation for erecting a fort there, I went one morning to view it, and took my engineer, Captain Knowles, with me, but when I came there I found nothing done of late at all, and only some remains of a fascine battery that had been erected there at the time of Admiral Hosier anchored off this port, where I believe they had only such guns as they could carry, there being no traces of a path to draw any up. It is the top of a small hillock on the opposite mouth of the harbour to the Iron Fort (San Felipe), of no extent to erect any considerable fort on. . . .
⁶

The second of the two additions to the city's defenses was the expansion of the Santa Bárbara gun platform of San Felipe. In 1735 the walls which divided the lower battery into several individual decks were all taken down and the deck itself was extended some distance to the east, nearly

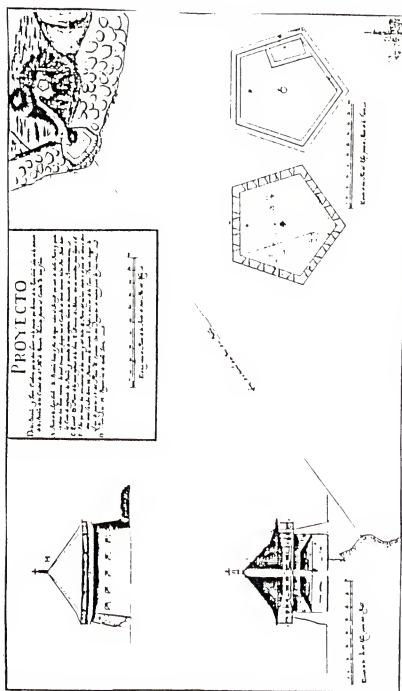


Figure 7-1 Portobelo: Fuerte Farnesio (Source: CU No. 76)

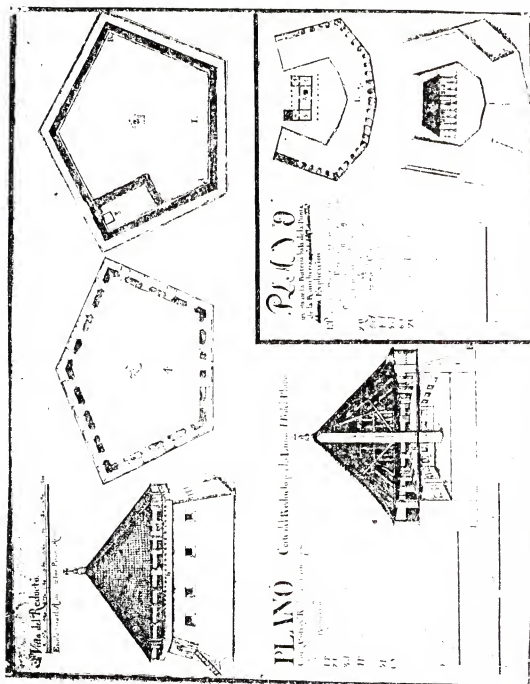


Figure 7-2 Portobelo: Fuerte Farnesio (Source: AGI/MP Panama 132)

doubling the artillery capacity of the parapet to 22 guns. Construction of the platform was finished by the time of Vernon's attack in 1739. The redesigned lower battery is shown in figure 7-3.⁷

In 1731 Herrera y Sotomayor also reactivated interest in the San Cristóbal site. His plan, depicted in figure 7-4,⁸ harkens back to Fernando de Saavedra's plan of the 1680s. Herrera y Sotomayor, by eliminating consideration of revisions made to Saavedra's plans in the late 1680s, made it possible to integrate the ruinous, but substantial work on the San Pedro bastion. A rather extensive glacis would have supplemented the San Pedro bastion on the landward side. Despite the soundness of the proposal, authorities on the Isthmus were unable to sell the plan to the crown. The San Cristóbal site was never again seriously considered for fortification.

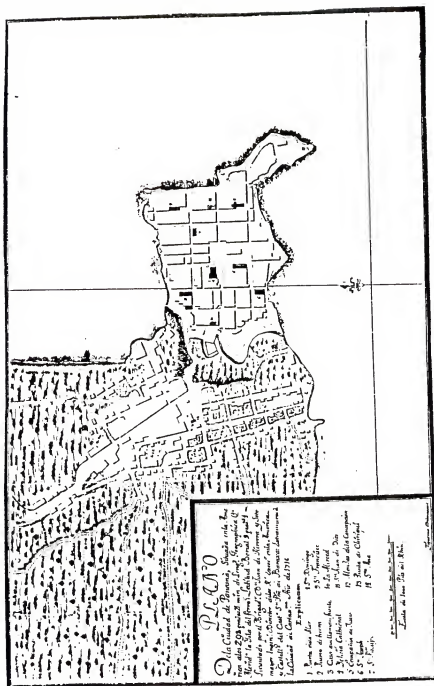
Castillo San Lorenzo was not significantly altered from the form it held after reconstruction in the 1680s, nor were any plans offered to improve the fortification's defenses. Unlike the seventeenth-century practice of letting San Lorenzo slip into disrepair, the newer fort was maintained in excellent condition against possible attacks. In 1719 one such assault came when a band of French pirates moved against the castle. They did not repeat Bradley's 1671 success,⁹ however, instead being beaten off in short order.



Figure 7-4 Portobelo: Another San Cristobal Proposal (Source: CU No. 75)

Neither were Panama City's defenses substantially changed during the early eighteenth century. A plan drawn by Herrera y Sotomayor in 1716 (figure 7-5) shows that in that year the city had the same form it had had in 1689, although on his map there is little detail of the landward defense structures.¹⁰

One interesting development indicated on the map is the spread of the city's population beyond the protective walls of the plaza. This trend would continue for the rest of the colonial era. Two additional plans were made in 1726, one depicting the city as it supposedly existed (figure 7-6), the second presenting a proposal for¹¹ refortification (figure 7-7). Figure 7-6, so carefully drawn, presents a depiction of a Panama far more regular in shape than the city that actually existed. Also, the landward bastions do not agree with earlier or later plans of the city. Accordingly, and despite the map's title--"La plantilla y estado en que oy existe la plaza y ciudad de Panamá"--it seems that the landward bastions Miguel de Horcasitas y Abellaneda drew on the map represent a proposed alteration--a regularization--of the city's defenses. Insofar as his second map is concerned, there is no doubt. On it is proposed a massive reconstruction effort that would have drastically changed the shape of the city, as well as the form of the defenses. At any rate, these proposal(s)¹² were not acted upon.



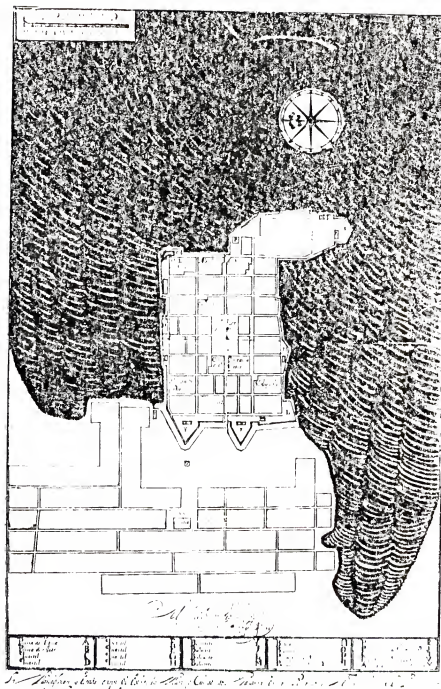


Figure 7-6 Panama City Defense Proposals (Source: AGI/MP Panama 131)

The First Vernon Expedition, 1739

The second of the great wars of the eighteenth century was the War of Jenkins' Ear, a conflict which is more formally known as the War of Austrian Succession. The War of Jenkins' Ear was the first international conflict which resulted almost exclusively from West Indian issues. Tension between England and Spain grew as the lesser partner of the Bourbon family compact realized ever more clearly that the asiento provisions of the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) were incompatible with prosperity within the Hispanic World Empire (at least on the peninsular side of the ocean). The South Sea Company, a London based joint stock venture which oversaw the permitted English trade with Spain's American possessions, was corrupt to the core and had as its primary goal the continuance and expansion of illicit commerce, a traffic which the Spanish crown correctly considered to be a root cause of imperial economic decline.¹³ By the third decade of the century, Spain began to strictly enforce trade laws, sending reinforcements to the guarda costas in an effort to establish better control over Spanish trade routes.

The Spanish measures were so effective that a serious reduction in illicit trading was felt in London. Not about to forfeit one of their richest and most lucrative markets, the commercial interests in British government circles began an anti-Spanish campaign that would lead to a steady

deterioration of relations until, in 1739, the moderates, headed by Walpole, were forced by radicals in Parliament to go to war. The incident which provided the match for the fuse was the supposed atrocity committed by a guarda costa officer on Captain Jenkins' ear; the English version of the story held that Jenkins, an innocent trader sailing not to Spanish ports, but rather between English colonies, was illegally stopped by Spanish authorities who then brutally cut off his ear. Spain, of course, denied that the incident of the ear had occurred, although admitting to having stopped Jenkins' ship and to having found contraband cargo on board.

One of the most outspoken critics of the moderate Walpole government was Edward Vernon, a naval officer who retired from his first career for a second one in Parliament.¹⁴ Born in 1684, Vernon came from a long line of civil servants and military officers. His early career was neither distinguished nor mediocre: he had joined the Royal Navy during the conflict with France at the end of the seventeenth century and was present at the fall of Gibraltar. He rose in rank in the first decades of the eighteenth century, achieving flag rank before turning to politics. Perhaps the most radical of the war faction, Vernon continually called for military action against Spain and her colonies in the New World. When war finally came, Walpole decided to appoint Vernon as Admiral of the Blue and send him

in command of a small squadron to the West Indies to ravage Spanish shipping. Vernon owed his appointment to two basic considerations: first he was probably the best man for the job (the years of peace after the War of Spanish Succession having produced no new officers of merit), and second, by shipping the Admiral to the New World, Walpole could put 3,000 miles between himself and his foremost political critic.

The operative strategy of the war during the first years was first to disrupt the Spanish commercial system and thus stop the flow of silver to the royal treasury in Madrid, and second, to expand British commercial ties with South America. Naturally such an agenda centered on Cartagena, Portobelo, and Panama. To implement this strategy, Vernon was under strict instructions from his superior in the Admiralty, Sir Charles Wager, to seek out and destroy the Spanish treasure fleet. While his orders mention that Vernon might find the flota in either Cartagena or Portobelo, he had no instructions to attempt to take either port.¹⁵

Once in the Caribbean, however, Vernon decided that an all out attack against a major port of the Spanish Empire was the most effective means of achieving Britain's war aims. Cartagena, Santiago de Cuba, and Havana, were all considered possible targets, but Vernon determined that he could do the most damage to the enemy by taking Portobelo and disrupting the fleet/fair system. Vernon's intention was to hold the isthmian port long enough to destroy the castles and render

the harbor useless to the Spanish as the site for future fairs. But more importantly, with the Portobelo castles taken down, English forces would be able to sail into the port at will, both to trade with the portobeleños and to use the harbor as a base of operations against Cartagena, Chagres, and Panama.

Vernon left Port Royal for Portobelo on 5 November 1739
16
with six capital ships:

<u>Burford</u>	70 guns	500 men
<u>Worcester</u>	60 guns	400 men
<u>Strafford</u>	60 guns	420 men
<u>Hampton Court</u>	70 guns	495 men
<u>Norwich</u>	50 guns	300 men
<u>Princess Louisa</u>	60 guns	420 men

This collection represented three-fourths of English naval strength in the Caribbean: over the course of the war, however, the Royal Navy's forces in the region would be expanded until at the time of Vernon's attack on Cartagena over thirty capital ships were deployed.

The defenses of Portobelo were never at full strength because of sickness and death among the enlisted men--1739 was no exception. In the harbor were two guarda costa
17
vessels of 20 guns and 5 small trading sloops. These ships were under the command of Don Francisco Abaroa. The force at San Felipe totaled 94 men, 53 marines, and 41 artillerymen. The lessons of Morgan's attack in 1668 had been forgotten as the castle still depended on being

provisioned daily from the city and had no reserve food
supplies. On the south shore, Santiago de la Gloria had
43 marines and artillerymen, together with 36 regulars.
Supplies in Santiago de la Gloria consisted of little more
than some casava bread and a barrel of aguardiente.

Even though Portobelo's defenses were in a bad state
owing to lack of supplies and personnel, Vernon had no reason
to believe that the city's forts were not at full strength:
accordingly, he gave strict orders to his captains for the
conduct of the coming battle. The plan called for the
English squadron to sail quickly into the harbor and destroy
the fortresses, hopefully without the loss of any English
ships. The specifics of the orders were as follows: 1)
the line of battle was in no circumstances to be broken--
Commodore Brown was to be in the van; 2) the ships were to
pass within a cable's length of San Felipe, "for giving the
enemy the warmer fire both from our musketry as well as our
cannon . . . "; 3) after passing San Felipe, Commander Brown
was to continue up into the harbor to Santiago de la Gloria
where he was to anchor and engage the castle with the
assistance of the Worcester; 4) Vernon in the Burford and
Captain Waterhouse in the Princess Louisa were to anchor off
San Felipe and engage that castle; 5) Captain Herbert in the
Norwich was to sail past both San Felipe and Santiago de la
Gloria and engage San Gerónimo; 6) each ship in the squadron

was to tow two long boats astern so that quick landings could be effected at whichever of the three castles seemed to be closest to capitulating. In addition, Vernon cautioned his captains about the inexperience of their crews:

And whereas from our men's unexperience in service it is necessary to take more precaution for preventing hurry and confusion, and a fruitless waste of our powder and shot, you are to give the strictest orders to the respective officers that command your several batteries to take care that no gun be fired but what they or those they particularly appoint under them see first levelled and direct the firing of, and that they strictly prohibit all their men from Hallowing and making such like confused noise that only serve to throw ourselves into confusion, till such time as the service is fully performed, and they have nothing left to do but to glory in their victory which such confusion may often prevent, and otherwise prove fatal to them.²²

Vernon arrived off the coast near Portobelo on 20 November 1739, but he did not approach the town until the next day. At noon on the 21st, the first ships of Vernon's fleet sailed into Portobelo and engaged San Felipe.²³ The careful plans Vernon had outlined to his captians, however, were rendered useless by adverse winds. Forewarned by Vernon's slow apporach, the Spanish defenders were given ample time to prepare for the onslaught. To compound matters, organization of the squadron was hampered by an illness which the Admiral had contracted--he would be out of service for several days. Because the original plan of attack had to be abandoned, and new orders were issued: the

line of battle was now the Hampton Court in the van, followed by the Norwich (which because of adverse winds was unable to join the first warship until 30 minutes after the attack began), the Worcester, and then the flagship Burford. Eventually the Strafford closed with the other ships and entered the harbor; the Princess Louisa, on the other hand, was able to enter the bay only after San Felipe had fallen.²⁴

Figure 7-8 is a map of the harbor on the day of the attack on San Felipe.²⁵ In the lower left hand corner the Princess Louisa is drawn, well out of the thick of the battle; the other principal ships of Vernon's squadron are shown directly off San Felipe. The depiction of San Felipe shows the redesigned gun deck.

To give their gunners better stability for accurate aiming, the English ships were anchored close by the fortress. Within the first 25 minutes over 400 shots were fired into the 9 foot thick walls, confirming the validity of the castle's nickname, "the Iron Fortress."²⁶ San Felipe's 22 guns, however, were not idle: shot after shot was fired into the English ships and the Norwich suffered considerable damage before the short engagement was over. As the battle grew hot, the English decided to attempt to land troops and storm the castle. Two boatloads of men, about 40 soldiers in all, under the commands of Captain Downing and Mr. Broderick, made their way through the fire and smoke towards the lower battery. Under the cover of fire from the Burford and the

Hampton Court, the small body of Englishmen were able to approach and overcome the defenders in the fortress. About an hour after the first shots had been fired, San Felipe capitulated. Five officers and thirty-five soldiers were taken prisoner.²⁷

During the course of the battle at San Felipe the town looked on, unable to lend any meaningful assistance to their embattled defenders. Santiago de la Gloria began an erratic barrage of the English vessels on the other side of the harbor, an action which had little effect because the ships were too distant for accurate fire. The English ships, however, on occasion returned fire towards the south shore and scored several lucky hits. A small trading sloop which was moored just off the aduana was sunk by a broadside from the Burford, and several shots fired from the same ship²⁸ landed in the town doing some damage to public buildings.

As soon as the English ships entered the harbor, the two Spanish warships began firing at the approaching enemy: soon, however, it became apparent that the guarda costas were no match for the English. The trading sloops near the city unloaded several sick passengers, the commanders of these vessels certain that all the ships would soon be destroyed. Only a few minutes after the attack began, the guns of Santiago de la Gloria began to misfire, explode, and fall off their carriages: to replace these useless weapons, many of

the guns on the two warships were unloaded and taken to the lower battery of the fortress. Most of the troops and gunpowder on the ships were also taken to the castle.²⁹

By the time the English had taken and consolidated their position in San Felipe, it was late in the afternoon. Vernon decided not to attempt to take the rest of the city that evening, opting to wait until daylight. Meanwhile, at 8:00 p.m. the officials of Portobelo called a junta de guerra in Santiago de la Gloria to discuss possible courses of action. The men that met in the castle were Don Francisco Abaroa (commander of the guarda costa), Don Francisco Xavier de Rettes (Governor of Portobelo), Don Sebastián Meléndez (Captain of the presidio), Don Juan Domingo (alferez de la ynfantería), and Don Francisco de Medina (alferez de navío). During the course of the meeting the rest of the munitions and supplies on the guarda costa ships were unloaded and taken into the fort. The junta decided unanimously that they would stay in the two remaining castles and make a good fight for the city and that surrender would only be considered if the situation became hopeless.³⁰

After darkness fell most of the vecinos of Portobelo--and thereby the militia--took to the hills with their valuables. All of the city's remaining armed forces gathered themselves into the castles, leaving the nearly deserted city to hundreds of slaves and criminals. Looting began at once. De Rettes ordered soldiers from Santiago de la Gloria to

sweep through the town after midnight to stop the rampaging. After several arrests were made these troops returned to the fort, reporting that the situation in the town was hopeless.³¹ The officers of the fort tried to round up enough troops to make another raid into the dark streets, but to their dismay they found that the number of men in the castle was much less than it had been at dusk. It seems that the troops were jumping over the walls of the castle and fleeing into the jungles. When dawn signaled the arrival of 22 November, the officers in Santiago de la Gloria found that all but a handful of their men had left the fort over the walls and were now encamped in small groups above the town on the steep hillside--in view of the castle, but out of the range of fire. To make matters worse, the English fleet had moved during the night to take up station directly in front of the town.

The Spanish officers realized that they were in a hopeless situation. At an impromptu meeting, the governor and military commander of Santiago de la Gloria found themselves in a difficult quandary: de Rettes expressed his fear that if they surrendered the fort, the English would not give honorable terms because the town had not defended itself well enough to deserve honorable treatment. The officers also feared that they might meet with violence from resentful vecinos of Portobelo if they surrendered without a fight. At

the same time, however, all those in positions of authority knew that a surrender was a foregone conclusion. The governor, therefore, decided to bluff the English into thinking that the city was prepared to defend itself at any cost and, at the same time, to make an offer to surrender if honorable terms would be granted. Accordingly, they wrote a letter to Admiral Vernon attesting to the great store of military supplies held in the fort, to the huge number of troops at hand, and to the eagerness of the garrison to die for their King. After this bold salutation the following

32

terms were requested by de Rettes and de Abaroa:

1. That Garrison march out of the Glory Castle in their ranks with their arms, beating a march and their colours flying, carrying with them their ammunition and clothes--and that the inhabitants of the place be allowed to remove their effects where they shall think most proper.
2. That the Spanish soldiers may have a guard of 100 men with proper officers to protect them from the insults of any people that may be in their neighbourhood.
3. That they may carry off two cannon mounted, with ten charges of powder for each, and their match lighted.
4. That if these articles are granted, the gates of the Glory Castle shall be opened to the English troops four days after the signing thereof,--and the Spanish Garrison to retire to the second part of the castle, to remain under arms until the English troops have taken possession, and then be permitted to go out, carrying with them their provisions and ammunition necessary for their safety.

5. And in respect to the shipping, as they have not committed any hostilities on the part of Spain, the two frigates and snow ought not to be given up, therefore the commodore desires that they, with their officers, soldiers, and crew, and all their necessaries be permitted without embarrassment to sail from this port where they shall think most convenient in order to return to their proper place of Rendezvous, without taking from them any of their arms or ammunition.

6. And we are particularly solicitous that our holy religious worship, the images of our Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord, that of the Holy Virgin and of the Saints, not be treated with contempt of disrespect, and also that all ecclesiastical and religious persons be civilly treated.

33

Vernon granted most, but not all of the requests. As to the first article, the Admiral had no intention of letting the Spanish stay in possession of the fort for four days—he demanded that both Santiago de la Gloria and San Gerónimo be surrendered that same day at precisely 3:00 p.m. and that the Spanish garrison march out by 10:00 a.m. the next day. Realizing the value of the guarda costa ships to the Spanish, he refused to permit them to leave the port, demanding instead that they be turned over to English officers within three days. Private possessions on the ships, however, could be removed by their owners. Vernon also offered to set free all prisoners taken with the fall of San Felipe. While the Spaniards were in no position to resist Vernon's offer, they did manage to successfully hold out on the question of the Spanish ships in the harbor: the English finally agreed to allow two of the sloops (but neither of the warships) to

sail to Cartagena with a letter from the Admiral granting them free passage should they be stopped by other English forces.³⁴ Negotiations over, the remaining forts surrendered at 3:00 p.m. Portobelo was again in English hands.

Captain William Newton, a commander of the militia of Jamaica (which was represented by 200 men on the Portobelo expedition) was placed in command of Santiago de la Gloria. Newton's first problem in his new charge was to check the tendency of the English troops to take anything that was not tied down. This was not the age of buccaneering: he initiated a very unpopular policy of searching every English soldier that went through the gate of Santiago de la Gloria, a program that stopped the flood of items out of the fortress. But the actions of English soldiers in the town were bad enough that the Admiral was forced to issue orders that no English sailors be allowed to go ashore without the company of an officer who could keep them in proper line.³⁵

Newton, as the commander of Santiago de la Gloria, assumed responsibility for the day to day administration of the town: in this capacity he confiscated all available cash in the castles, in the churches, and in the aduana, delivering the sum to the flagship. Under Newton's directions the property of many of Portobelo's leading citizens was confiscated and deposited in the store rooms of the castle.³⁶

These items would be eventually returned to their owners.

Vernon immediately set about his immediate task-- demolishing the fortifications of the city. The realization that their principal Atlantic port on the Isthmus was soon to be defenseless caused a great stir among royal officials in both Portobelo and Panama City. The governor of the fallen city pleaded with Vernon to leave some of the town's defenses so that when the English fleet left the citizens would not be open to pirate attack.³⁷ The President of Panama wrote several letters to Vernon in an attempt to save the Portobelo forts. The President and other officials of Tierra Firme went out of their way to give in to all of Vernon's requests in the hope of stopping the demolition procedure. They gave in to Vernon's demand that personnel of the South Sea Company then being held in Panama for illegal trading be given their freedom and even went so far as to order the South Sea Company to repair the damage Vernon's ships suffered in the taking of San Felipe!³⁸ The governor also requested that the English permit Spanish trading vessels bringing food to Portobelo to continue provisioning the town unhindered.³⁹ All these appeasements, however, gained the Spanish nothing. By 11 December each of the historic castles of Portobelo was no more than a heap of useless rubble.⁴⁰ In the process of dismantling the forts, the English confiscated 40 brass cannons, 4 brass mortars, and 18 smaller brass guns; the eighty or more iron cannon found in the forts were not

considered valuable enough to take away--instead they were spiked and left among the ruins.

After the demolition of the castles, Vernon prepared to return to Port Royal, pleased in the knowledge that he had achieved a stunning success. Shortly before the English fleet left, the principal citizens of Portobelo wrote a letter to Vernon thanking him for being kind to the residents of the city during his stay--certainly in contrast with their previous experiences--and begging him to leave some English forces in the port to stop a flood of pirates into the town.⁴¹ Vernon refused, and, when he finally sailed on 13 December, the city went into a greater panic than it had when the English fleet first arrived. Despite the understandable fears of the residents of Portobelo, no pirates attacked the city while the defenses were down.

The return trip to Jamaica, however, did not go well for the English fleet: storms hit and did considerable damage to every ship in the squadron. Some vessels were so damaged that they were unable to continue on to Port Royal and had to turn back to Portobelo. The ships that returned to the Isthmus found that the citizens of the port, still fearful of pirates, welcomed them back, and it was no trouble for the English to get help and supplies to restore their ships to seaworthiness.⁴²

The reaction in Europe to Vernon's success was quick. In Spain the King was so dejected that he reportedly was

thrown "into a fit of melancholy, that if the Queen did not hinder, in all probability he would resign."⁴³ In England the nation basked in the joy that wartime victory brings, although Walpole's allies privately minimized the importance of the action.⁴⁴ Vernon's victory represented the highpoint of English fortunes in Panama: even an important plaza in London was renamed and today remains known as Portobelo Square. The subsequent defeats of Vernon before the gates of Cartagena and Santiago de Cuba, and the lack of any significant English military activity in Europe would make the taking of Portobelo from her 173 ill-equipped defenders the principal English success of the long war. Portobelo, however, had not seen the last of Edward Vernon.

Subsequent English Expeditions Against Panama

One of the most important reasons Vernon moved against Portobelo in the first place was that the fine harbor would make an excellent base for further English operations against the Spanish Main. Vernon's forces were to take advantage of the city for this reason on two occasions, first after a small scale bombing expedition to Cartagena that paved the way for the great invasion of that port in 1741, and second during the aborted attempt to capture Tierra Firme in 1742.

Vernon returned to Portobelo on 14 March 1740. His original intention was to anchor in the harbor, water and

refit his ships, and then sail back to Port Royal. While there, however, he decided to reduce castillo San Lorenzo at the mouth of the Chagres, an action which would leave the entire north coast of the Isthmus undefended.⁴⁵

Vernon arrived off San Lorenzo on 24 March, 1740, the Castellano, Juan Carlos Butiérez, surrendered the fort without a fight that same day. Perhaps just as Morgan's brutality at Portobelo in 1668 led to stiff resistance at San Lorenzo in 1671, so too did Vernon's respectable treatment of the portobeleños in 1739 lead to quick capitulation at Chagres in 1740.⁴⁶ When the fortress capitulated Vernon captured some 350,000 pesos in goods in the many storage houses in the town. The British admiral, however, had no intention of dividing his forces between Portobelo and San Lorenzo for long--his mission was to destroy the castle, not keep it. Accordingly, within a day of his arrival San Lorenzo's brass guns were loaded on the English ships, the iron ones spiked, and finally, the castle was destroyed with explosives. Several maps of the river mouth in the years after Vernon's demolition detail his thoroughness (figures 7-9 and 7-10).⁴⁷ As soon as the English fleet returned to Portobelo, 326 soldiers were sent from Panama City to restore order in the chaos. There was little they could do but heave stones over the cliff.

Back in Portobelo, Vernon was again requested by the citizens of the city to permit the erection of some sort of

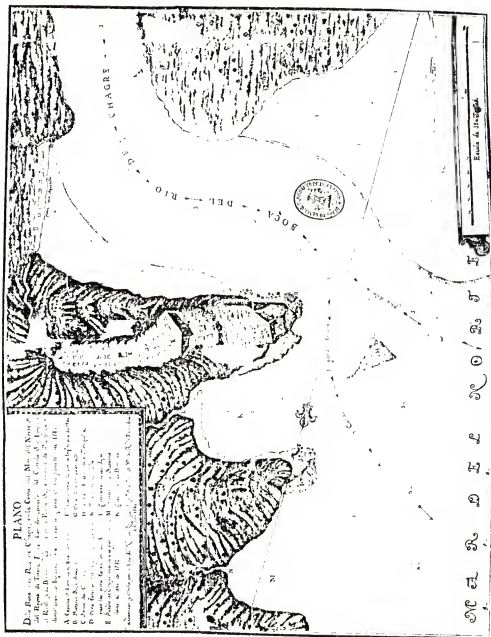


Figure 7-10 San Lorenzo After Vernon (Source: CU No. 86)

defenses, no matter how small, to give some protection against possible pirate incursions. Persuaded that the threat was real, and perceiving an opportunity to reward the portobeleños for the support that had been given to the English fleet, Vernon gave permission for the city's officers to set up four cannon in the ruins of Santiago de la Gloria.⁴⁸ One day later, 6 April 1740, Vernon's squadron sailed for Port Royal.

Between Vernon's second visit to Portobelo in the spring of 1740 and his final return to the place in April 1742, the English forces in the Caribbean, although greatly augmented, suffered humiliating and costly defeats at Cartagena and in Cuba. In an effort to save both his reputation and the English military position in the West Indies, Vernon decided to return to Panama with a large invasion force which could march across the Isthmus from Portobelo to take Panama City. Such an action, Vernon thought, would effectively bring to bountiful fruition the initial English war strategy of dealing a death blow to the Spanish commercial system. The plan was to land some 600 men at the deserted harbor of Nombre de Dios, who would then march up the coast towards Portobelo, clearing the area of any Spanish troops; concurrently, the fleet would sail into Portobelo and await the arrival of troop transports, provisions, and naval vessels that had not been ready to sail with the Admiral at

the time of departure from Port Royal. When Vernon arrived off Tierra Firme, however, no troops were landed at Nombre de Dios--instead the fleet simply sailed into Portobelo. As Vernon had not been in Portobelo for two years, he did not know if the Spaniards had reconstructed any of the fortifications. Accordingly, not knowing what reception he would receive, Vernon ordered the fleet to enter the harbor in line of battle. Vernon need not have worried, as the authorities on the Isthmus had undertaken no action to reconstruct the defenses of the port. The citizens of Portobelo again took to the hills when they saw the enemy squadron tacking into the harbor with battle flags flying. Seeing the panic he had created, Vernon quickly dispatched some officers to the town to reassure the citizens that they had no cause to fear. The Admiral faced no opposition in retaking the port, and soon English soldiers were in place throughout the city.⁵⁰ He remained in Portobelo from 28 March to 9 April, 1742.

Once Vernon arrived in the port, Jamaican authorities persuaded him to abandon his risky plans to march to Panama City: instead of another military success, the Admiral had to content himself with the promotion of trade between English subjects and Portobelo--the primary goal of the Jamaican merchants. As early as Vernon's first voyage to Panama, the establishment of commercial relations with the people of Portobelo had been a high priority to the English. On each

of the subsequent English visits to Portobelo, large numbers of Jamaican merchants traveled with the fleet to trade goods in Panama. The promotion of trade was one of the main reasons for Vernon's good treatment of the portobeleños; he wrote in April, 1740:

And as the neighbourhood of this town has been the principal mart for our merchants getting off such quantities of our manufactures in exchange for their bullion before the establishing a South Sea Company interrupted the private trade, my principal view in my favour to the inhabitants of Porto Bello has been to lay a solid foundation of intercourse between our merchants and them,⁵¹ to recover so beneficial a trade to the nation.

To facilitate this commerce, Vernon ordered that the road from Portobelo to Panama be kept open during times of English occupation so that free trade might be maintained.⁵²

On his last visit to Portobelo Vernon wrote:

As I knew it to be of consequence to his Majesty's service, and of great utility to the general benefit of the trade of the kingdom, I have made it a constant rule, since my command in these seas, to cultivate a friendly correspondence between his Majesty's subjects and the Spaniards in the Indies, for preserving their good will in carrying on a clandestine trade with each other.⁵³

In his policy of promoting free trade, Vernon was remarkably successful. He was always able to obtain whatever provisions he needed from the Spaniards in Portobelo through trade; and Jamaican merchants were able to expand what had already been a lucrative commerce. This expansion in illicit trade,

together with the destruction of the forts, made any recovery of the Spanish fleet/fair system impossible: in this regard⁵⁴ Vernon successfully carried out England's first war aim.

In 1744, after Vernon had been replaced in the West Indies by Admiral Ogle, the isthmus was again the site of wartime operations. Buoyed by their victories at Cartagena and Cuba, Spanish officials tried to reestablish some form of control over the illicit trading going on at Portobelo. Authorities on the Isthmus confiscated a vessel involved in contraband trade and detained a wealthy Englishman by the name of Christie. William Kinghills, an English captain, sailed to Portobelo in July to reaffirm the rights of free trade⁵⁵ established by Vernon two years before. Kinghills arrived at Portobelo on 2 August with two capital ships, a frigate, and bomb ketch. Kinghills demanded that the authorities in the city release the ship and the English merchant. When the portobeleños refused to cooperate, Kinghills shelled the city with 500 rounds of shot, destroying many of the better homes and government offices (including the aduana near the main plaza). The defenseless city, of course, then gave in to the captain and Kinghills left the next day. Kinghills' 1744 attack was the last military action in Portobelo during the eighteenth century.

As soon as Kinghills sailed from Portobelo, the President of Panama, Dionisio de Alsedo y Herrera, set about

providing Portobelo with at least a minimal defensive capability: a short trinchera was dug, and fifteen small calibre cannon were emplaced. One has to wonder how much faith the vecinos of Portobelo could have placed in such a small entrenchment when the mighty San Felipe had fallen in one hour to the fire of only four ships.⁵⁶

Imperial Epilogue

Although the year 1739 marked the end of Panama's role as a primary imperial center, the remainder of the eighteenth century was not one of total neglect. Indeed, soon after the War of Jenkin's Ear was over, Portobelo, Panama City, and San Lorenzo witnessed significant military construction, the remains of which today--moss covered and half ruined--deliver powerful testimony to a once great empire.

Portobelo

The crown ordered Ignacio Sala, one of the most highly regarded Spanish military engineers of the eighteenth century, to leave his post as administrator of the fortifications of Cartagena and travel to Portobelo and design new defenses for the harbor. Sala arrived on the isthmus in 1753. Sala, like his predecessors, realized that the best solution to Portobelo's defense problems was the relocation of the city to the San Cristóbal site; he also realized, however, that such a move was financially out of the question. With this option ruled out, the plan most

advocated by officials on the isthmus was the reconstruction of Santiago de la Gloria and San Felipe. But Sala recognized that these forts had been poorly located, and since their condition was so ruinous after Vernon's thorough demolitions, he urged the construction of new fortifications.

Sala proposed that three new forts be built at tactical points around the harbor. The first, and in Sala's view, the most important of these was San Fernando, which, located on the north shore, was envisioned as the replacement for San Felipe. While modified slightly during construction by Manuel Hernández (the engineer who saw to the actual building of Sala's proposals), the castle was erected essentially as⁵⁷ proposed in 1753 (figures 7-11 and 7-12). The fort was divided into two parts, the upper battery which held six 12 pound cannon, and the lower batter which mounted fourteen 24 pounders, although eventually the upper battery came to have⁵⁸ 18 pounders as well. As can be seen in figure 7-12, the upper battery ("I") was positioned some 200 feet in elevation above the lower battery ("A"). A long protected (but not covered) walkway connected the two parts of the fort ("N"). The two San Fernando batteries were oriented towards the mouth of the bay, as is illustrated in figure 7-13, which⁵⁹ shows the firing ranges of the three new forts. The main change that was made during the construction of San Fernando was that the powder magazine ("D") was moved from the center

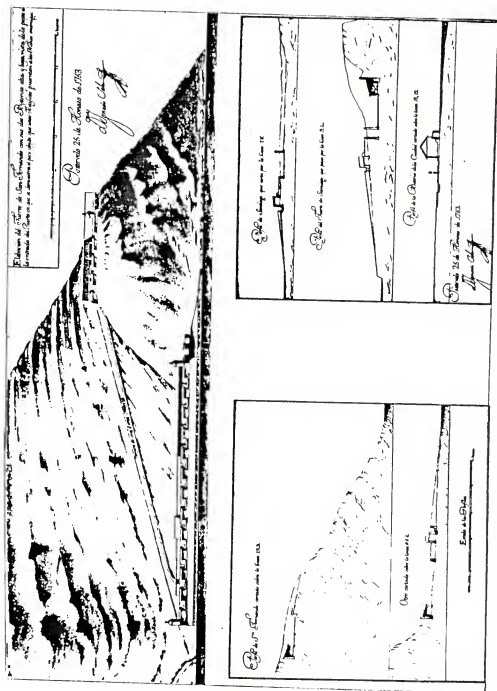


Figure 7-11 Castillo San Fernando (Source: CU No. 79)

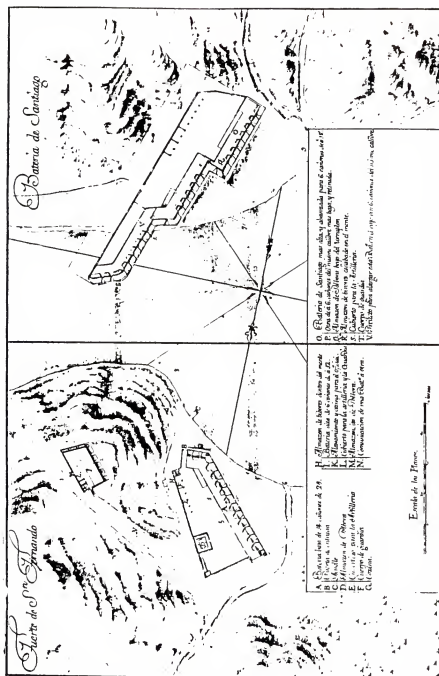


Figure 7-12 Castillos San Fernando and Santiago (Source CU No. 79)

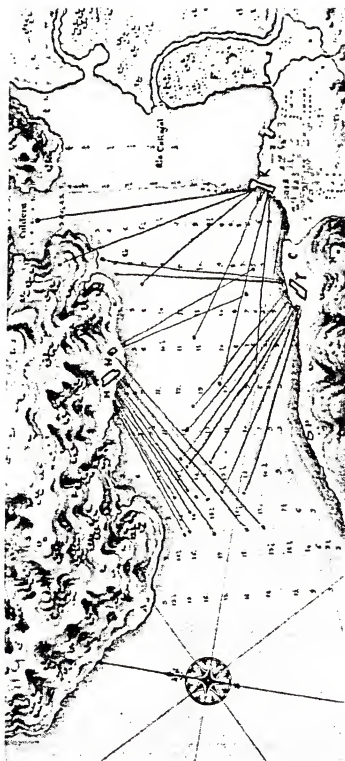


Figure 7-13 Range of Fire of the Portobelo Forts (Source: Webster, Back Cover)

of the landward wall to the northeastern corner ("X"). Both batteries were equipped with troop quarters, officers quarters, kitchens, latrines, and cisterns, although the ones in the upper battery were quite small.

The second of the new forts was the third of the Portobelo forts to be named after St. James, and was located only a few dozen yards from the ruins of Santiago de la Gloria. the new Santiago, however, was far smaller than the demolished castle. Similar to San Fernando, Santiago's two batteries, were oriented towards the mouth of the bay. Whereas San Fernando consisted of two very separate parts, Santiago was a single unit, and all together only about as large as San Fernando's lower battery (figure 7-14).⁶⁰ The upper and lower batteries of Santiago were equal in size and strength, the plans calling for six 18 pounders to be positioned in each. Eventually the fort mounted fourteen cannon, all twenty-four pounders. A vaulted munitions room was constructed beneath the upper gun deck. The rear wall of the fort, that part facing the ruins of Santiago de la Gloria, was unprotected save for musket ports. There was no cistern in Santiago, instead water was channeled into the fort from a small creek which flowed down from the hills at the site. While all the new forts had low walls so as to offer as small a target as possible to enemy gunners, because of a well constructed grassy glacis in front of its walls, Santiago offered virtually no target to possible enemies.

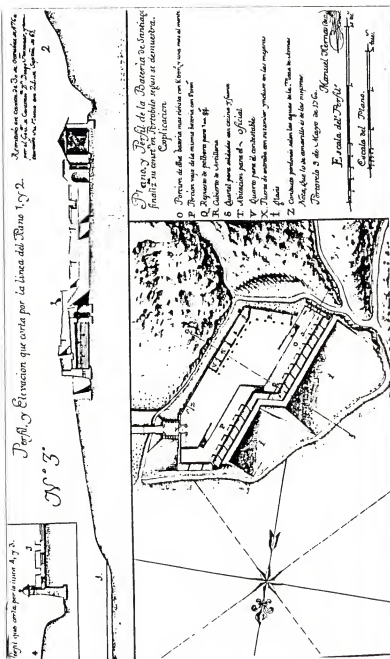


Figure 7-14 Castillo Santiago (Source: CU No. 80)

The third major fort proposed by Sala was the new San Gerónimo. Again consisting of two batteries, San Gerónimo stood just off the aduana in the same location as the earlier fortaleza of the same name. Figure 7-15 depicts this fort.⁶¹

Hernández was able to use the old foundations of the mid-water battery in the construction of the upper platform of the new fort. This upper battery ("A") roughly corresponds in size and shape with the former redoubt. The major part of the fort, however, was the extended lower battery which connected the upper battery to the shore. This battery was large enough to hold 18 cannon, while the upper platform had gunports for 5. San Gerónimo was fitted with 32 pounders, the largest cannon at Portobelo. The fort had quarters for officers and 200 soldiers, 2 powder magazines, and a large cistern in the upper batter. The entrance ("O") was protected by a raised parapet ("N"). As in the case of the other forts designed by Sala, the rear wall was essentially unprotected save for musket ports. Because San Gerónimo was built low to the water and in a swampy area, the entire structure is unusually damp--sometimes under water. The powder magazine of the upper batter was particularly prone to being waterlogged.

Sala's defense plans, however, were not limited to these three forts. The engineer realized the deadly role sniper fire from the surrounding hills could have on defenders in

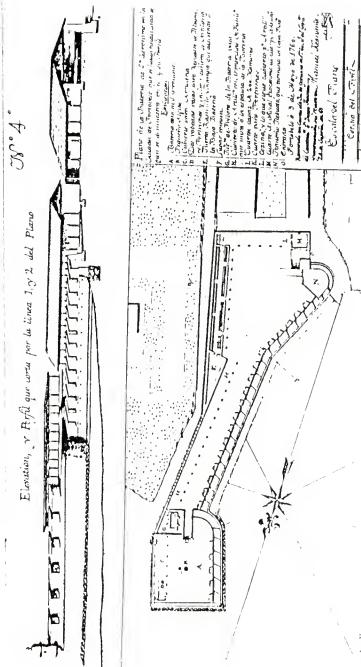


Figure 7-15 Reconstructed San Geronimo at Portobelo (Source: CU No. 81)

the forts below. To assure Spanish control of the heights during attack, Sala proposed the construction of 4 casas fuertes, or small forts, about 500 feet above Santiago, San Fernando, the city, and the camino to Panama. The four casa⁶² were to be identical in form (figure 7-16). Measuring 40 feet per side, these little square structures had two floors--the top one made of wood--a cistern, a watch tower, a moat, and a drawbridge. The designs called for each casa to have eight small cannon and a complement of musketeers. Only the casas above Santiago and San Fernando were eventually built. The one other military construction resulting from Sala's plans was the building of a main munitions dump, which was constructed some two miles up the Río Cascajal from Portobelo⁶³ (figure 7-17).

In 1778 the crown sent Agustín Crame to survey the major ports of the Indies and comment upon their defenses. His recommendations for Portobelo were very limited and resulted in nothing more than the construction of a small earthenwork which held four cannon on the top of the high ridge of the south shore.⁶⁴

Portobelo's new forts were never really tested in battle, although in 1814 Benito Chasserieux, fighting on the side of the independistas, mounted a minor attack on the city which was quickly driven off. In 1819 the extravagant Gregor MacGregor of Florida history fame took the city with 417 men⁶⁵ in three ships without a fight. Shortly thereafter,

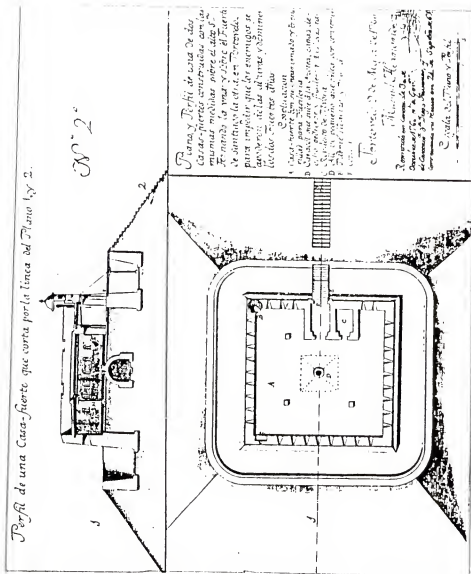


Figure 7-16 Plan of the Casa Fuertes (Source: CU No. 83)

however, the Spanish retook the town in a surprise attack, and most of the invaders were placed in slavery. Spanish control of Portobelo ended on 28 November 1821 when José de Fábrega, the leader of the independent isthmus, arranged for its surrender. The forts quickly fell into disrepair, and Portobelo retreated into the status of an unimportant fishing village. A fishing village it remains today.

The Río Chagres and San Lorenzo

In the aftermath of Vernon's demolition of San Lorenzo in 1740, little was done to restore the defenses of the Río Chagres. The need for the refortification of the mouth of the river was apparent, but the expense of rebuilding the fort was so great that inertia overcame better judgement. Also, the Vernon attacks did not evince the same level of fear as had the seventeenth-century buccaneer invasions. After all, Vernon's forces had respected the vecinos of Portobelo, treating them well and engaging in free trade.

The first attempts at reconstructing the defenses on the Chagres were the building of fortalezas by Juan de Sobreville in 1749 at the confluences of the Chagres and the Río Gatun and Río de la Trinidad. Both forts resembled the structures raised at the same sites after the Morgan attack on Panama. Again, both forts were made of wood and earth, though the construction was more durable than had been the case in the 1680s. The fort at Gatun was the larger of the two,

consisting of two batteries and numerous outlying buildings. Plans for both forts are presented in figures 7-18 and 7-19.⁶⁶

As for San Lorenzo itself, the site was all but neglected until 1760 when plans were made for the construction of a new fortification on the cliff top. An early plan is presented in figure 7-20.⁶⁷ Although subsequent construction under the direction of Manuel Hernández between 1761 and 1768 nearly exactly followed this plan, before it was finally approved another proposal was submitted which called for the area within the fort's walls to be nearly doubled--a proposal that would have made San Lorenzo the largest fort in the New World (figure 7-21).⁶⁸ This proposal was rejected by 1761 when construction of the Hernández fort began.

As is indicated on figure 7-20, the new San Lorenzo consisted of two distinct parts, the major of which occupied the same area at the top of the cliff as had the late seventeenth-century fort. The other part, an extensive elevated artillery deck provided the outer defense against a land attack. Within the main fortress, 5 large vaulted chambers ran under the principal landward gundecks--the largest of which was 40 meters long and nearly 8 meters wide. The gun platform on the north side of the castle (that facing the portete) also had vaulted chambers, though somewhat

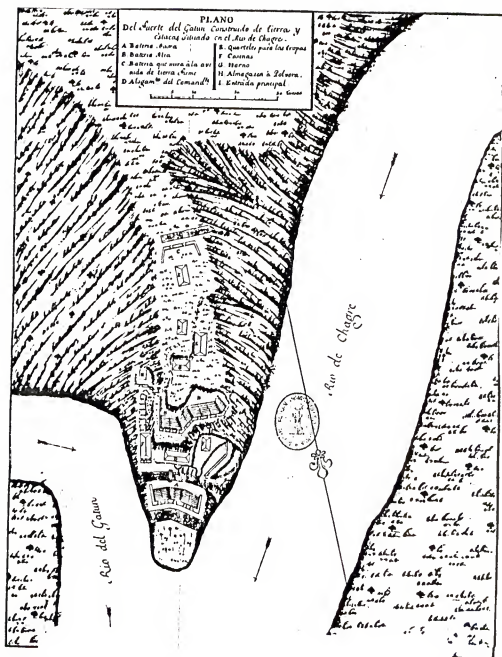


Figure 7-19 Fortifications at Gatun (Source: CU No. 88)

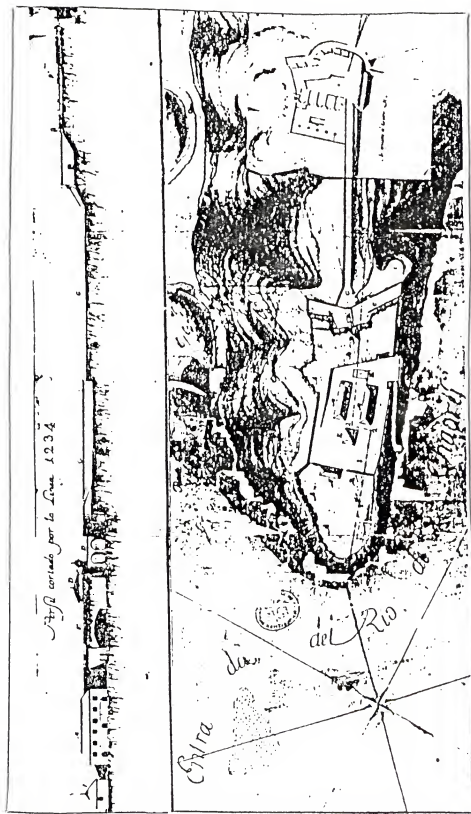


Figure 7-20 Castillo San Lorenzo (Source: Serv. Historico Militar de Madrid, 6.077:E-11-12 H. 5a)

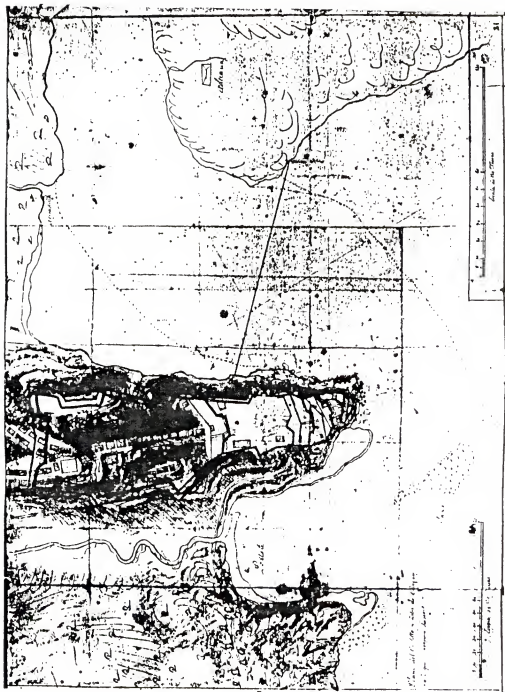


Figure 7-21 San Lorenzo (Source: AGI/MP Panama 21)

smaller. The point of the peninsula was fortified with a long, curving artillery platform. At the opposite end of the castle, on the landward side, two half-baluartes provided cross cover for the gate, which itself was protected by a deep moat. Within the fortress stood several large buildings (some 2 stories high) for quartering troops and officers, all of which were made out of either stone or brick.

By 1768 the new San Lorenzo was finished. It was the largest, most powerful defense structure ever built on the isthmus--even grander in scope than the walls of Panama City. Nevertheless, when Agustín Crame made a visita to the site in 1779, he recommended further constructions to strengthen the castle's landward defenses. To this end he proposed the demolition of some minor defenses just beyond Hernández' baluartes, all of which were replaced by a massive semicircular gundeck with emplacements for 12 cannon, a second moat, and positions for additional musketeers. These alterations--costing some 100,000 pesos--were carried out in
69
short order (figure 7-22).

The Crame adjustments to the Hernández fort were the final constructions at colonial San Lorenzo. This is the fortress that remains today, and is presently undergoing restoration. An archaeological survey map made of the place in 1981 is presented in figure 7-23, which reflects the
70
present status of the ruins.

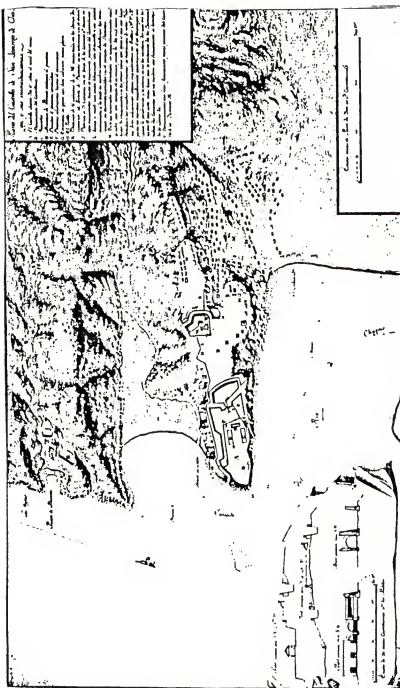


Figure 7-22 Castillo San Lorenzo (Source: Serv. Historico Militar de Madrid 6.077:E-11-12 H.2)

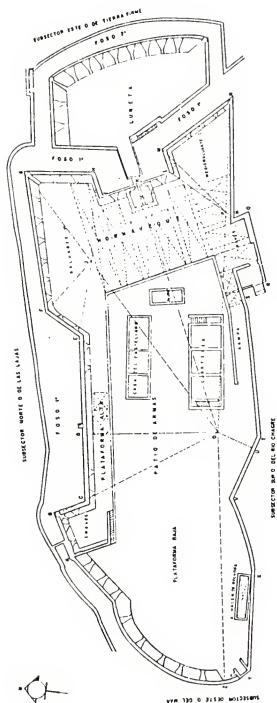


Figure 7-23 Present Condition of San Lorenzo (Source: Patrimonio Historico, Inst. Ntl. de Cultura)

Panama City

Hernández, like other military engineers of his day, was completely dissatisfied with the landward defenses of Panama City. Not only were they seemingly insufficient to repel an enemy attack, but since they were built in the 1670s, the city had grown well beyond the fortified area (figure 7-⁷¹24). Some alterations had been undertaken insofar as the city gate was concerned between 1730 and 1747 (figure 7-25),⁷² but the general lay of the defenses remained unaltered. Accordingly, in 1766 Hernández proposed a major new addition to the city's fortifications in the form of a four-part fort on Ancón hill, about a mile inland from Panama City. The central structure was to be a large fortress, connected to three smaller structures by cut paths. This plan is⁷³ presented in figure 7-26. The batteries of the main fort would have overlooked and provided additional cover for the landward defenses of the walled city. Hernández' proposals, however, remained just that, and nothing was ever done to carry them out. They were still floating around when Crame made his visit in 1779, but even though he found the city's fortifications insufficient, he refused to endorse the⁷⁴ expensive Ancón plan. Indeed, no major revisions to Panama City's defenses were undertaken during the remainder of the colonial era.

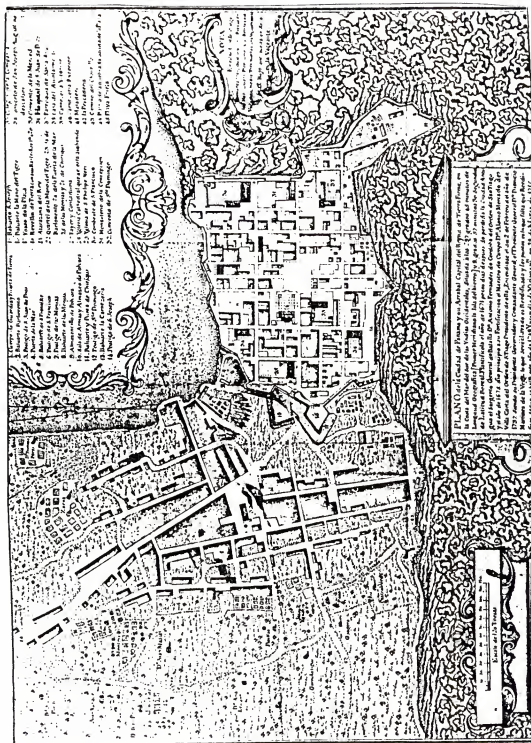


Figure 7-24 City of Panama (Source: Bib. del Palacio Real de Madrid, MS 1622)

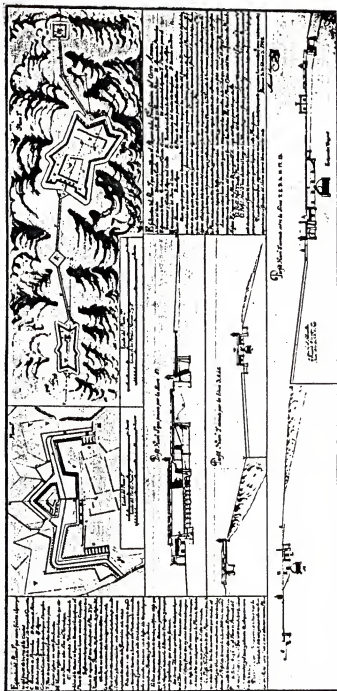


Figure 7-26 Plan for the Fortification of Ancon (Source: CU No. 72)

Although the eighteenth century saw the demise of Panama's economy--and thereby the region's significance for the empire--Spain was able to launch massive fortification programs during the 1750s and 1760s, the result of which was, at long last, a properly defended isthmus. The colonial era, however, was over; the new government of Colombia had neither the resources nor the need to maintain the isthmian fortifications. San Lorenzo became a prison before being totally abandoned in the mid-nineteenth century; Panama City's walls were torn down in the 1850s to make room for urban sprawl; and Portobelo was left all but deserted to rot in the sweltering jungle heat.

Notes

1

See chapter 2 of this study for a more detailed discussion of eighteenth-century economic readjustments. An additional study of some significance is Manuel Alberola, Panamá au XVII^e siècle (1739-1810): Evolution économique et social d'une zone stratégique de l'Empire Espagnol, Ph. D. dissertation, University of Paris, 1975.

2

The best source available on the Farnesio structure is Alfredo Castellero Calvo, "El fuerte Farnesio en Portobelo," in Revista Lotería, 182 (1971) pp. 1-18.

3

Hosier is briefly discussed in Castellero Calvo, "El fuerte Farnesio," pp. 9-10. Much more detailed information can be found in Zapatero, San Lorenzo, p. 141 and John Houston, The

Works of John Houston, M.D., Containing Memories of his Life and Travels in Asia, Africa, America, and Most Parts of Europe From the Year 1690 to the Present Time (London, 1753), pp. 156-158.

4

Castillero Calvo postulates that the cannon emplaced in the 1726 earthenwork were removed as soon as the Hosier threat dissipated--indeed the flota of that year took the cannon with them back to Spain ("El fuerte Farnesio," pp. 5 and 11).

5

"Proyecto de la Bateria y Torre Cubierta que se deve hacer en la punta que llaman de la Rancheria sita en la entrada de la Ciudad de San Phe. de Portovelo..." 1731, Map no. 76, Cartografía de Ultramar; "Plano corte y vista del reducto cubierta se debe hacer en la montaña de la punta de la Rancheria a la entrada de la bahia de Portobelo," 1731, AGI Mapas y Planos Panamá 132.

6

Vernon to Sir Charles Wager, 5 April 1740, The Vernon Papers, edited by B. McL. Ranft, (London, 1958) p. 85.

7

"Plano sacado a la vista del Castillo de Todo Fierro de Portovelo," 1735, map no. 77, Cartografía de Ultramar.

8

"Plano de la Ciudad y Bahya de San Phelipe de Portobelo," 1731, map no. 75, Cartografía de Ultramar.

9

Information on San Lorenzo before the Vernon attack is well summarized in Zapatero, San Lorenzo, pp. 155-157.

10

"Plano de la Ciudad de Panamá. . . ." 1716 by Juan de Herrera y Sotomayor. Map no. 52 Cartografía de Ultramar. Mention is made of his 1716 visit in Zapatero, "La plaza fortificada," pp. 235-237.

11

"La plantilla y estado en que oy existe la plaza y ciudad de Panamá en los reynos de Tierra Firme del Peru," 1729 by Miguel de Horcasitas y Abellaneda, AGI Mapas Y Planos Panamá 131; "Nueva plantificación y construcción de la plaza y ciudad de Panamá en los reynos de Yndias y Tierra Firme del Peru," 1726 by same author, AGI Mapas y Planos Panamá 130.

12

Zapatero ("La Plaza fortificada" and San Lorenzo) makes no mention of Abelláneda's visit or proposals.

13

See George Nelson, "Contraband Trade Under the Asiento," and Vera Lee Brown, "The South Sea Company and Contraband Trade." Another important study is Walker, Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade. Also see E. G. Hildner, Jr., "The Role of the South Sea Company in the Diplomacy Leading to the War of Jenkins' Ear, 1729-1739," HAHR 18:2 (1938) pp. 322-341 and R. Pares, War and Trade in the West Indies, 1739-1763 (Oxford, 1936).

14

A biography of Vernon, however fanciful, exists: Douglas Ford, Admiral Vernon and the Navy: A Memoir and a Vindication (London, 1907). Portobelo is discussed briefly on pp. 136-137.

15

Orders to Vernon from Sir Charles Wager, 7 October 1739, Vernon Papers, pp. 25-26.

16

Francis Russel Hart, Admirals of the Caribbean, (Boston, 1923) p. 134; also see Vernon Papers, pp. 29-30, Vernon to Captains, 3 November 1739. A useful review of the English attack is contained in A New History of Jamaica, From the Earliest Accounts to The Taking of Porto Belo by Vice-Admiral Vernon (London, 1740) (no author given). Also see George Anson, A Voyage Round the World in the Years 1740, '41, '42, '43, '44. (London, 1974), especially p. 195.

17

"This Plan of the Harbour, Towns, and Forts of Porto Bello" drawn by Philip Durell, 1739.

18

James F. King, "Documents: Admiral Vernon at Portobelo," p. 268 (hereinafter referred to as "King Documents"), Report of council of war held in Santiago de la Gloria, 21 November 1739.

19

Don Francisco de Aboroa, "Relación de lo executado en la defensa y rendición de los castillos de Portobelo y de las Fragatas y pawuibut guarda costtas, 1739," in "King Documents," pp. 275-280, which is the main Spanish account of the disaster.

20

This information was related at the council of war held in Santiago de la Gloria, 21 November 1739, "King Documents," pp. 269-271. The junta decided that the proveedor was to blame in that he had been slack in his duty to see that the forts were well provided.

21

Vernon to Captains, 7 November 1739, Vernon Papers, pp. 32-34.

22

Ibid., p. 34.

23

Council of War held in Santiago de la Gloria, 21 November 1739, "King Documents," pp. 269-271.

24

Newton to Vernon, 24 November 1739, Vernon Papers, p. 39; Webster, "The Defenses of Portobelo," pp. 19-20.

25

Map by Philip Durrell.

26

Anderson, Old Panama p. 397.

27

Ibid., p. 398, and A History of Jamaica.

28

Map by Philip Durrell and Anderson, Old Panama, p. 398. Also see Walker, Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade, p. 207-208, pages which do not contain much detail.

29

"Relación de lo executado en la defensa. . . " "King Documents," pp. 275-280.

30

"Junta de Guerra," coast guard officials, "King Documents," pp. 268-269.

31

The following paragraphs come from the "relación" in King Documents.

32

Offer of capitulation from de Rettes and Abaroa, 22 November 1739, Vernon Papers, pp. 35-36.

- 33
Vernon's response to offer of capitulation, Vernon Papers, pp. 36-37.
- 34
Letter of Passage given to Francisco de Abaroa, 7 December 1739, Vernon Papers, pp. 44-45.
- 35
Newton to Vernon, 23 November 1739, Vernon Papers, p. 37.
Vernon to Captains, 24 November 1739, Ibid., p. 37.
- 36
Newton to Vernon, 29 November 1739, Vernon Papers., p. 42;
"Relación," "King Documents," p. 274.
- 37
Governor of Portobelo to Vernon, 24 November 1739, Vernon Papers, p. 40.
- 38
King, various documents; also see President of Panama to Vernon, 4 December 1739, Vernon Papers p. 43.
- 39
Governor of Portobelo to Vernon, 24 November, 1739, Vernon Papers p. 40; "Relación," "King Documents," p. 274.
- 40
As Vernon reported to Captain Knowles, 11 December 1739, Vernon Papers, pp. 45-46; Edwin C. Webster, The Defense of Portobelo, (Cristóbal, 1970) p. 20.
- 41
People of Portobelo to Vernon, 6 December 1739, Vernon Papers, pp. 43-44. The need to refortify the city was critical in Spanish eyes. By 1741 the defenselessness of the city worried Spanish officials, causing the writing of a report calling for new forts: "Proyecto de arbitrios utiles y medios faciles para reedificación de las foralezas de San Phelipe de Portovelo y San Lorenzo el Real de Chagre, con brevedad y muchos ahorros en servicio de SM. . . 1741," Servicio Histórico Militar, 6.703; 5-2-5-2;
- 42
Vernon to Sir Charles Wager, 18-31 January 1740, Vernon Papers, pp. 55-63; also see p. 50, Vernon to Captain Watson, 8 January 1740.

43 Sir Charles Wager to Vernon, 6 August 1740, Vernon Papers, pp. 117-119.

44 William Pulteney to Vernon, 17 August 1740, Vernon Papers, pp. 119-121.

45 Vernon to Sir Charles Wager, 5 April 1740, Vernon Papers, pp. 80-87.

46 The outline of the capitulation is presented in Castillero, Grandeza y Decadencia, p. 13 and in Zapatero, San Lorenzo, p. 164. Additional material--not specifically related to San Lorenzo, but rather covering the whole of the Jenkins' Ear conflict--is H. W. Richmond, The Navy in the War of 1739-48 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1920).

47 "Plano de la Boca del Río de Chagre, en la costa del mar del Norte del Reyno de Tierra Firme. Con demostración del Castillo de San Lorenzo el Real, y su Bateria baja, que en la Punta Septentrional de dicha boca demolieron los Ingleses en esta presente guerra. . . " 1745, map no. 86, Cartografía de Ultramar; "Plano de la boca del río de Chagre, en la costa del mar del Norte de la América Septentrional en el Reyno de Tierra Firme. . ." 1949, Biblioteca del Palacio Real, Madrid, MS 1622. An additional map not presented as figures relate the same information: "Plano del Castillo y sus Contornos del Citio de Chagre Año 1740," Servicio Histórico Militar, 5.250: D-15-6.

48 Vernon to Captains, 5 April 1740, Vernon Papers, p. 88.

49 Vernon to the Duke of Newcastle, 13 March 1742, Original Papers Relating to the Expedition to Panama (hereinafter referred to as Panama Papers, (London, 1744) pp. 61-63.

50 Vernon to Captains, 27 March 1742, Panama Papers., pp. 71-72.

51 Vernon to Sir Charles Wager, 5 April 1740, Vernon Papers, p. 86; Vernon to Alcalde of Portobelo, 7 April 1740, Ibid., pp. 87-88.

52

Vernon's order of 2 April 1742, Panama Papers, pp. 81-82.

53

Vernon to General Wentworth, 2 April 1742, Panama Papers, pp. 82-83.

54

Morerya Paz-Soldán, "La toma de Portobelo por al Almirante Vernon y sus consecuencias económicas," in Mercurio Peruano, 23:257 (1948) pp. 298-329.

55

The only data this researcher has found regarding the Kinghills attack is a paragraph or two in Castellero Calvo, "Portobelo", p. 182 and a few lines in Zapatero, San Lorenzo, p. 144. There is also a slight mention of Kinghills in Castellero Calvo, "El fuerte Farnesio," pp. 13-14.

56

Castillero Calvo, "Portobelo", p. 182.

57

"Plano particular de la Ciudad de Sn. Phelipe de Portovelo. . ." 1753, map no. 78 in Cartografía de Ultramar; "Plano del Fuerta de Sn. Fernando y Bateria de Santiago," 1753, map no. 79 in Cartografía de Ultramar. Also note "Instrucción que debe observar el capitan Manuel Hernández en la construcción de las fortificaciones proyectadas y resueltas por mi en virtud de Real Orden para defender la bahia y ciudad de Portovelo," 1753, AGI Panamá 356. Sala's proposals are also outlined in his report and map of 25 January 1753, "Relación o descripción de la bahia y ciudad de Sn. Phelipe de Portobelo," AGI Panamá 356.

58

The data regarding cannon comes from both my measuring of the guns remaining today at Portobelo (taken as minimum numbers), and Webster's identification of 49 cannon among the ruins in the 1960s. Also, it has been possible to extrapolate cannon totals from the number of guns remaining taken against the number of gunports constructed in the artillery platforms.

59

Map of Portobelo dated 1775, preserved in the British Maritime Museum by Luis de Surville, published in Webster, The Defenses of Portobelo, "back cover.

60

"Plano y perfil de la Bateria de Santiago," map no. 80 in Cartografía de Ultramar.

61 "Plano de la batería de San Gerónimo en la ciudad de Portobelo. . . " 1753, map no. 81 in Cartografía de Ultramar.

62 "Plano y perfil de una de dos casas fuertes construidas con las mismas medidas el alto de Sn. Fernando la una; y sobre el Fuerte de Santiago la otra, en Portovelo," map no. 83 in Cartografía de Ultramar.

63 "Plano de Almacén de Polvora a media legua de la Ciudad de Portovelo. . . " 1760, map no. 82 in Cartografía de Ultramar. This magazine was blown up in an accident in the 1960s by the Golden Eagle Oil Company which used the structure to store equipment.

64 This writer has not seen this site, although Webster reports several cannon still remain there (Defense of Portobelo, back matter; also see "Plano de Portovelo," 1779, map no. 84, Cartografía de Ultramar).

65 See Webster, The Defense of Portobelo, p. 24 and Castillero Calvo, "Portobelo," pp. 184-185. MacGregor's activities in Portobelo are thoroughly discussed in Alfred Hasbrouck, Foreign Legionaries in the Liberation of Spanish South America (New York, 1928) pp. 139-164. Also of use are two contemporary sources, Sir Gregor M'Gregor, An Account of the Late Expedition Against the Isthmus of Darien (London, 1821) and M. Rafter, Memoirs of Gregor M'Gregor (London, 1820). Both of these are biased so as to maximise the valor of the Englishmen involved in the exploit. A more balanced contemporary account is W. Davidson Weatherhead, An Account of the late Expedition Against the Isthmus of Darien Under the Command of Sir Gregor M'Gregor (London, 1821). The background story of MacGregor's strange adventures in Florida is detailed in David Bushnell, ed., La República de las Floridas: Texts and Documents (Mexico City, 1986).

66 "Plano del Fuerte de Gatun construido de Tierra y estacas situado en el Río de Chagre," 1750, map no. 88 in Cartografía de Ultramar; "Plano del fuerte nombrado santísimo Sacramento, nuebamente construydo en la boca del río de la Trinidad, vertiente en el de Chagre, que proyecto el Brigadier D. Juan de Sobrevilla. . ." 1749, Biblioteca de la Palacio Real Madrid, ms 1622. "Plano y Perfil de las fortificaciones ultimamente construydas en la boca del Río del Gatun, en las riveras del de Chagre, por haver arruynado

el tiempo, las anteriormente fabricadas. . ." 1749, Biblioteca del Palacio Real Madrid, ms 1622.

67

A good account of the reconstruction of San Lorenzo is contained in Zapatero, San Lorenzo, pp. 184-192. "Plano del proyecto de Chagres formado en el año de 1763," por Manuel Hernández, Servicio Histórico Militar, 6.077: E-11-12;

68

"Plano del Castillo y Zitio de Chagres con lo que se propone hazer," 1760, AGI Mapas y Planos, Panamá 21.

69

"Castillo de Chagre el 9 de febrero de 1779. . ." by Agustí Crame, Servicio Histórico Militar, 6.077: E-11-12. Crame found 10 bronze cannon at San Lorenzo (6 at 24 pounds, 4 at 6 pounds); and 23 iron guns of varying calibre. See his report, "Existencia de la artillería, arms, pertrechos y municiones de guerra que se hallan en el Castillo de Sn. Lorenzo el Real de Chagres, 5 febrero 1779," Servicio Histórico Militar, 6.712: 5-2-8-6.

70

"Plano Rector 1.2 "Castillo San Lorenzo el Real de Chagre. Analítico. Panamá, 18 de Octubre de 1981. "Asesor Histórico Militar comdte. Dr. Juan Manuel Zapatero. Arquitecto Dr. Sebastián Paniza.

71

"Plano de la ciudad de Panamá y su arrabal capital del Reyno de Tierra Firme. . ." 1756, Biblioteca de Palacio Real, ms 1622.

72

"Scenographia. Perspectiva Cavallera, o militar de la puerta de Tierra de la Ciudad de Panamá, Capital del Reyno de Tierra Firme en las costas de la Mar del Sur, con torre nuebamente construyda para la Camana Horaria los dos Baluartes la Mano del Tigre y Barlovento. . ." 1747, Biblioteca del Palacio Real, ms. 1622.

73

"Plano y Proyecto del frente de tierra de la Ciudad de Panamá y otro proyecto de fortificación del Cerro de Ancón," 1766, map no. 72 in Cartografía de Ultramar.

74

Crame's visit to Panama City is discussed in Zapatero, San Lorenzo, pp. 203-207.

CONCLUSIONS

Out of the preceeding review of colonial Panamanian defenses jump several interesting common threads that permit some general observations on Spanish defense policy at both the strategic and tactical level.

Tactical Conclusions

The first thing that stands out in the previous chapters is that despite the considerable effort--financial and logistical--made to plan, build, and man the fortifications of Panama, they rarely provided sufficient defenses for the isthmus. This is especially apparent in the history of Portobelo. On seven occasions Portobelo was attacked (Drake in 1596, Parker in 1601, Morgan in 1668, Sharp in 1679, Vernon in 1739, Kinghills in 1744, and MacGregor in 1819), and each time the town fell (although the 1596 invasion can be discounted because the forts were not yet built, and in 1744 they were still out of commission because of the Vernon demolitions). In both the 1668 and 1739 invasions, the

attackers took out one of the major forts and received the other through surrender. In both instances the initial attacks were quite fierce and the Spanish defenders made good and brave showings. By the time Santiago de la Gloria fell to Morgan, most of the garrison had been killed, the handful remaining surrendering only after they were surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered by the attacking pirates. When San Felipe fell to Vernon's fleet after about an hour of fighting, less than 30 men were taken prisoner--they had fought valiantly against constant fire from five ships of the line, not to mention a simultaneous land assault. In 1668 after Santiago de la Gloria was taken, San Felipe surrendered to Morgan after only a small skirmish--a skirmish which the Spaniards won. The castellano of the fort felt that he could not hold out against the attackers because he did not have sufficient supplies of food and ammunition to withstand a long seige. Some 70 years later Santiago de la Gloria capitulated to Vernon for exactly the same reason. An important conclusion, therefore, is that the fortresses themselves were quite able to make credible showings during frontal attacks, but because of shortages of supplies and troops, their officers had no chance to put up extended resistance.

Shortages of troops and supplies are easy to explain. The climate of the coast around Portobelo was such that there

were high sickness and mortality rates that caused the city to be ever short of manpower: in 1739, for instance, the town's complement of about 130 men in the two castles and fort San Gerónimo was more than 400 under the number the crown had allocated for the defense of the city. The shortages in food supplies that played such an important role in the eventual surrenders of the castles probably can be attributed to the infrequency of attacks. While officers were quick to criticize and demand better service from the *proveedores* after major battles, over the course of the many years that separated each of the Portobelo military actions, these same officers became less concerned with the day-to-day trivialities that would have made the defenses better prepared. When the attacks came, therefore, supplies were short.

In 1601 and 1679 the situation was quite different. On these occasions the castles were bypassed by attackers who successfully occupied the city. Parker was able to avoid the guns of San Felipe by keeping his launches close to the south shore, well out of the effective range of the fort. Parker's invasion pointed out to military engineers the need for a major south shore fortress. Santiago de la Gloria was the result. When Sharp invaded Portobelo in 1679, he moved down into the town from the east end of the valley of the Río Cascajal, taking the port from the rear and avoiding any need to engage the castles. The Sharp attack, and to some extent

the Parker raid, illustrated that the city and its fortifications were not situated in the best possible location on the bay, and the disastrous musketry fire from the hills above the town which aided Morgan so effectively against Santiago de la Gloria further underscored this fact. The obvious solution to the problem (a problem which can be blamed on Antonelli, who had chosen the location for the city) was to move Portobelo to the San Cristóbal site. Anonelli himself eventually realized that the San Cristóbal site was superior to the location he had chosen for the new city back in 1585. Plans to move the city surfaced on more than one occasion, but the expense and size of the project confounded all efforts to bring about the move. Ignacio Sala decided upon the next best thing when, in 1753, he ordered the construction of the casas fuertes on the ridges above his new forts to prevent the heights from being taken by the enemy. Only two of the proposed casas were built, and these were never tested in battle. Sala's forts, however, failed to correct the gaping hole in the city's defenses that Sharp had exploited in his attack: the new fortifications were constructed strictly as artillery platforms to defend against naval attack. Sala designed his forts to concentrate a large number of cannon towards the west end of the harbor. Surely, however, he could not have seriously expected San Gerónimo or Santiago to withstand a full-scale land attack with their ten foot high walls and tiny musket ports.

On the other hand, the Portobelo forts did play a partially successful role in that they acted as a strong deterrent against attack. Seven assaults in two-hundred years is not exactly an intolerable level of violence. The initial construction of the fortifications certainly led to a sharp decline in corsair activity off the Tierra Firme coast at the end of the sixteenth century, and in 1668 half of Morgan's forces (the French contingent, for the most part), abandoned the expedition when they learned that the reportedly well defended Portobelo was the destination. And, what might Hosier have done in 1726 had the forts been less formidable than they were?

The case of San Lorenzo presents a different set of circumstances. While few expenses were spared in the fortification of Portobelo in the first half of the seventeenth century, isthmian authorities seemed hesitant to invest resources in the fortification of the Río Chagres. Antonelli understood the importance of the location--the key to Panama and Peru, as he called it--but even so, the fort he designed was hardly on the scale of his greatest castles. His work at the river mouth, like his constructions at Portobelo, were plagued by poor workmanship and bad location. Be that as it may, if the examples of Panama are to be believed, Antonelli's reputation as the overarching genius of early New World fortifications can certainly be questioned.

Part of the reason for the neglect of San Lorenzo was that it was considered a first line of defense for Panama City. Even if the fort should fall, isthmian authorities argued, the fifty mile wide jungle that stood between Panama City and the north coast would stop all but the most substantial aggressors. In this assumption they were, no doubt, correct. Morgan's 1671 success came only because it was one of the largest buccaneer expeditions in Caribbean history.

In 1671, San Lorenzo put up a good fight against Bradley's pirates, and the Spanish probably would have won the battle if it had not been for the extensive use of thatched palms in the construction of the fort. Sheer negligence rather than pirate planning caused the loss of the castle.

Morgan's march against Panama City pointed out how much the city's defenses had been neglected. Indeed, reliance on geography was almost total. After Panama fell, however, a vigorous effort was made to guarantee that such a disaster would never again occur. In this effort--which saw the moving of the city and the construction of massive city walls--the Spanish were successful, for despite complaints about the quality of the fortifications, the city never again fell to invaders.

In the aftermath of the 1671 disaster, San Lorenzo was rebuilt as a major fortification, essentially guaranteeing

Spanish control of the Chagres. In 1719 a small band of pirates tried to take the fort, but they were driven off in short order. Vernon's success against San Lorenzo in 1740, on the other hand, can be attributed to lack of will to fight on the part of the Spanish. While Morgan and the buccaneers caused horror and terror in the Spanish heart, Vernon's arrival off the Chagres signaled an opportunity for free trade and commercial success. No battle was desired, thus none required.

Strategic Conclusions

It is the Panamanian defenses as they relate to wider Caribbean defenses that offer the most rewarding conclusions. The isthmus of Panama (and especially Portobelo) was considered by royal officials in Spain to be one of the most important areas of the New World empire, ranking perhaps as high as third behind Mexico and Peru in imperial significance. When Bautista Antonelli wrote to Philip II arguing that Portobelo was the llave to Peru and the Pacific, northern Europeans such as Drake were coming to the same conclusion. The isthmus, accordingly, received the constant attention of both Spanish authorities and non-Spanish interlopers for the duration of the colonial era. If anything, in the eighteenth century English designs on Panama were expanded, the possible conquest of the region being viewed as a certain way to end Spanish rule in the Americas and to expand British commerce into the Pacific.

Like Drake and Vernon, Spanish officials recognized that the successful defense of the isthmus was critical if Spain's ever more tenuous hold on the New World was to be maintained: to this end the crown spared little expense or effort. As the Atlantic port in Tierra Firme was the point at which the danger of foreign attack against the carrera was greatest, the defenses of the isthmus naturally centered on that port. Portobelo, therefore, was always on the minds of authorities in Spain whenever the defense of the empire was considered.

The transfer of the Atlantic port from Nombre de Dios to Portobelo in the last years of the sixteenth century represented the first readjustments of imperial defense policy (on land, at least) in the Caribbean area since the early sixteenth century when small fortifications were thrown up in Santo Domingo. By this time the threat to the Spanish Empire--a threat augmented by Drake and Hawkins--had become great enough to demand the renewed attention of the crown. The defensive measures taken by Philip centered on both the fortification of the principal harbors of the carrera and territorial adjustments that would leave poor harbors such as antigua Veracruz and Nombre de Dios nothing more than deserted stretches of coast. The founding and fortification of Portobelo (and, to a lesser, but still important extent, Havana) were the most important legacy of the early defense efforts directed by Antonelli.

The next major period of Spanish defense initiative in the Caribbean, namely the last quarter of the seventeenth century, saw significant activity in Portobelo, San Lorenzo, and Panama City. These seventeenth-century undertakings were direct responses to the age of buccaneering: Panama City and Portobelo suffered as greatly if not more so than any other area of the Empire during this unfortunate phase of Caribbean history. The ambitious constructions carried out in Panama City, and attempted but finally abandoned work in Portobelo, were the result of desperation on the part of the crown to protect their lifeline of Indies silver. When Spain's economic decline turned into Spanish economic collapse in the 1680s, the San Cristóbal constructions at Portobelo were in full swing. When the bottom finally fell out from under the Hapsburg government in Spain, the projects at Portobelo had to be abandoned.

The last period of military construction in Panama, 1753-1768, also reflects currents which flowed throughout the empire: during the decades after the War of Austrian Succession (1739-1748) fortifications and military reforms made themselves felt in every corner of the indies. The Sala forts in Portobelo which date to this era are excellent examples of the new eighteenth-century military architecture that can still be observed in so many Latin American ports.

The fact that Panama's military chronology fits so well into identified imperial trends brings up an important

question: does Panama merely by chance reflect so perfectly these imperial defense currents, or did military catastrophes on the isthmus provide the catalyst for defense initiatives which then spread from Panama throughout Hispanic America?

The facts seem to support the view which maximizes Panama's importance. Each of the three major periods of empire-wide defensive activity, 1575-1607, 1675-1690, and 1750-1770 directly follow military disasters on the isthmus. At the same time, these disasters were not always paralleled in other parts of the empire. For example, while Drake's several voyages to the Caribbean perhaps involved attacks or raids on non-isthmian ports such as Santo Domingo, Cartagena, or St. Augustine, with the exception of 1585-1586, each expedition was strategically centered around Tierra Firme; when Philip II dispatched Antonelli and Tejada to the New World, the king was reacting as much to the military situation in Panama and the three major raids carried out by Drake as to any other specific events.

When Charles II's government set about constructing defensive works around the Caribbean in the 1680s, Portobelo and Panama were not only the most ambitious and expensive projects, but were the central thrusts of the overall program. A direct link can be established between the construction of Pacific fortifications in the viceroyalty of Peru and the fall of Panama. To be sure, the depredations of

the buccaneers which reached a high point with the attacks on the isthmus were the obvious motivation behind the late seventeenth-century program of fortification construction.

Again in 1753 when defensive activities reached another high pitch, even though new forts were constructed in dozens of locations, the flagship project was the refortification of Portobelo and San Lorenzo, these in direct response to the demolition of fortifications by Vernon in the 1740s.

In short, when military setbacks occurred in Panama, because the silver lifeline of the Spanish empire was directly threatened, the need for expanded Caribbean defenses became an issue for the front burner. After major traumas to Panama, then was Spain moved to action to preserve not only the isthmus, but other New World ports as well.

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Panamá 14. Letters relating to Antonelli.

Panamá 15. Royal treasury documents from 1600-1607; letters from Sotomayor and Valverdi de Mercado about Portobelo's poverty; limited information of fraud.

Panamá 17. Reports on the collection of taxes and fraud; material on the fair of 1622.

Panamá 24. Various cartas y expedientes written by audiencia members, 1668-1671.

Panamá 25. Documentation relating to the new Panama City.

Panamá 29. Materials on sixteenth-century roads and Nombre de Dios; materials on Nata.

Panamá 30. Papers generated by the cabildo of Panama City, late sixteenth century.

Panamá 32. Cabildo letters from Portobelo, Panama City, and Nata detailing poverty of seventeenth-century Portobelo.

Panamá 33. Documents relating to defense problems in the 1570s.

Panamá 34A. Documents concerning fraud in fleets and fairs (1623); construction of the aduana.

Panamá 39. Materials on vecinos of Panama City (1544) and Nombre de Dios (1560s).

Panamá 40. Defense problems during 1570s; some commercial material.

Panamá 41. Defense problems during 1570s; Oxenham's attacks.

Panamá 42. Materials on mules, late sixteenth century.

Panamá 44. Material on Antonelli and Portobelo fortifications; some material on Drake.

Panamá 45. Letters, etc., detailing poverty of Portobelo.

Panamá 72. Letters, etc., from 1670s.

Panamá 78. Material on Santa Catalina, mid seventeenth century.

Panamá 79. Expedientes detailing reconstruction of Panama City, 1672-1698.

Panamá 81. Expedientes regarding the 100,000 peso ransom Panam City paid for Portobelo in 1665. Documents date to 1669-1678.

Panamá 87. Junta de Guerra, 1616-1676.

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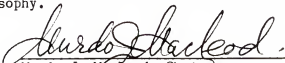
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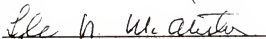
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Eliot Ward was born on October 3, 1960 in Daytona Beach, Florida, to Anne D. and Jack R. Ward. He lived in Daytona Beach until the early 1930s when he entered Stetson University in DeLand, Florida. There he majored in history, graduating in 1983. Although his program had been oriented toward European history, a trip during the summer of 1983 to the Republic of Panama redirected his studies into the field of Latin American history. It was while on this course that he entered the University of Florida for graduate study in 1984. By 1986 he had received his Master of Arts degree for a thesis on the history of Portobelo, Panama. While working for his Ph.D., Ward published several journal articles on Latin American and Florida history, in addition to numerous book reviews. Aside from Latin American history, his interests include Maya archaeology, Spanish history, and book collecting. In addition to perusing his Ph.D., Ward is a free-lance editor for Unwin and Hyman Publishing Company's Latin American series. He presently lives in San Francisco, California.

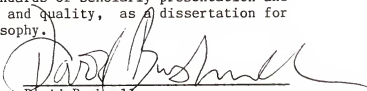
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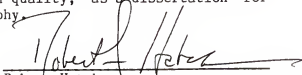
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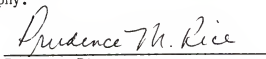
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